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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Sunday, April 2, 2006 ## Vol. 21 / No. 115 website: www.inq7.net

1st in RP: Mom watches son on Web deliver valedictory

By Gia Duruso-Dumo
Correspondent

THE SELF-CONFESSED "ABSENTEE MOM" WAS overjoyed to learn that her only son had been chosen to deliver the valedictory speech in behalf of the graduating class of the Ateneo Grade School in Quezon City.

But joy quickly turned to sadness for Socorro Victor Lejardiaz, a government employee on a

1ST IN RP /A2

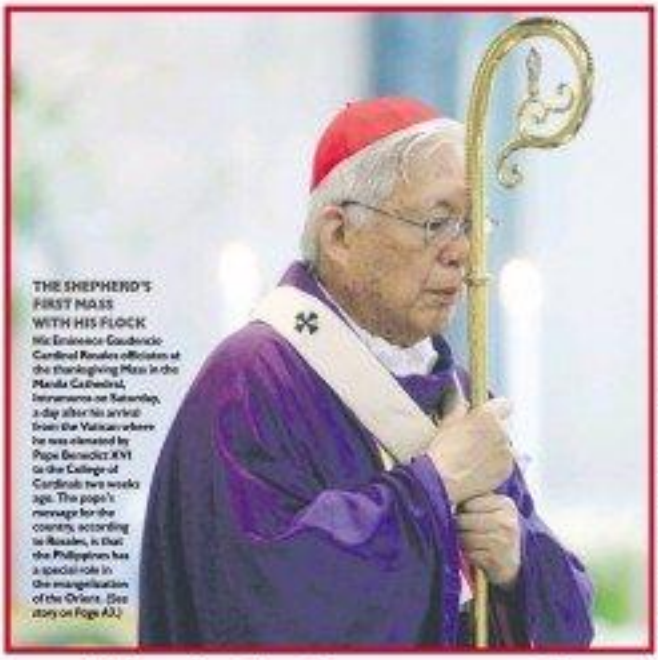
US hospitals groaning under patients' weight

ST. LOUIS—GOING TO the hospital is rarely fun, if you weigh over 300 pounds like Beth Henk. It can be similar to torture.

"I've flipped on exam table—I sat on the end of it and it just flopped up," said Henk, whose weight

US HOSPITALS /A23

Meralco monopoly over



THE SHEPHERD'S FIRST MASS WITH HIS FLOCK
His Eminence Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales officiates at the thanksgiving Mass in the Manila Cathedral, Intramuros on Saturday, a day after his arrival from the Vatican where he was elevated by Pope Benedict XVI to the College of Cardinals two weeks ago. The pope's message for the country, according to Rosales, is that the Philippines has a special role in the evangelization of the Orient. (See story on Page A3.)

Palace accepts Lopezes' offer to open competition to other power producers

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Abigail L. Ho

IT'S NOW OPEN SEASON IN THE POWER SECTOR.

Under pressure to lower electricity rates, the Manila Electric Co. has finally agreed to allow other power producers to supply the electricity requirements of its large industrial and commercial customers who consume at least 1 megawatt (MW) a month.

Meralco's "unconditional offer," contained in a letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo, was immediately accepted by the government which only a few months ago had threatened to take over the country's largest power utility for non-payment of P42 billion owed to the National Power Corp. (Napocor).

Meralco currently has 494 large industrial and commercial customers each with a demand volume of 1 MW and above. These large clients accounted for about 25 percent of Meralco's total electricity sales last year.

Meralco, however, will continue to serve those customers who do not choose an alternative power supplier.

"Meralco fully supports the government's desire to move forward on deregulation which would enable customers to avail of cheaper electricity rates, facilitate the privatization of Napocor, and address the looming capacity problem," Meralco chair and chief executive officer Manuel Lopez said in his letter to the President last March 28.

Albay Rep. and Ms Arroyo's economic adviser Joey Salceda, who brokered the deal, described Meralco's "goodwill gesture" as the "breakup of the last major oligopoly in the Philippine domestic market."

"Meralco has been studying how it can concentrate its support and believes it may have a solution in the light of the new sweeping directions for Meralco called for by the Epira [Electric Power Industry Reform Act]. At this time, Meralco believes that it should concentrate on its distribution business and on supplying its captive market which are its franchise obligations under Epira," Lopez said.

Lopez told the President that Meralco's offer would result in lower rates to large industrial and commercial customers and encourage them to stay and attract new investors to the country.

Foreign investors have been complaining of the high cost of doing business in

MERALCO /A2

World looks back on Pope John Paul the Great

VATICAN CITY—FOR A WHILE, THE world didn't seem the same without him. The most photographed man in history had disappeared, and the Roman Catholic Church he led with such fervor for nearly 27 years was left with a giant void to fill.

A year after the death of John Paul II, Catholics are learning to live his successor Pope Benedict XVI, who began putting his own stamp on the Church when he elevated 15 cardinals at his first consistory two weeks ago.

But John Paul II's reputation as the dominant moral voice of the age, as an advocate of human dignity, as a victor over communism and as an architect of Christian reconciliation with Jews, is undiminished.

"John Paul II does not yet know the desert which few great men escape after their death. Perhaps he will be spared that," reflected Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, one of the late pope's closest collaborators.

"That pope was the spokesman for the conscience of humanity," the cardinal said. "One can well understand how non-Christians were impressed by him."

When he died on April 2, 2005, the impact was felt worldwide. Political leaders who had beaten a path to his door as a spiritual sounding board, would soon jostle for elbow room at the biggest funeral in history.

WORLD /A20

Mayors told: Do an Atienza, dance to tune of the Cha-cha

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG IS ENCOURAGING other mayors nationwide to follow Manila Mayor Lito Atienza's lead.

"The sooner our local officials have the signatures for Charter change verified by the Commission on Elections, the sooner we can move to the next step, which is a plebiscite," said Michael Defensor, President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief of staff.

Atienza, the first mayor to officially hop on what Mr. Arroyo called the Charter change "train," presented to the Comelec on Friday 155,125 signatures that he said were gathered from Manila's six districts.

The signatures, representing approval of the proposed shift from the presidential to the parliamentary system of government, are to form part of the planned people's initiative to amend the 1987 Constitution.

But Defensor said Malacañang was leaving to the city and town mayors the decision on what to do with the signatures supposedly gathered by the multisectoral coalition Sigaw ng Bayan in their respective districts.

Malacañang continued its push for Charter change via a people's initiative, which it described as "an amiable farce."

Said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a radio interview: "The Constitution vested continuous powers on the people to propose amendments to our basic law. This was designed so that elitist politicians like those who oppose constitutional reforms won't have a monopoly of what is good for the country.

"The people are seeking genuine change in our political system, and this cannot be held hostage by politicians who are out of fear of losing their hold on power."

NATION /A4

Benedictine monks live on edge of seat of power, witness history

By Christian V. Esguerra

APART FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD, there's another group that has, through the years, grown accustomed to the chaos of political rallies at Mendiola Bridge.

Unlike their neighbors who are almost always dressed in full battle or riot gear, the handful of Benedictine monks cloistered in the Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat would never resort to violence to maintain the peace.

They prefer to stay behind the walls of the 105-year-old monastery in deep prayer and work—ora et labora. It's a way of life inspired by St. Benedict, the Italian monk born in 480 A.D., whose teachings and ascetic ways became popular in the 6th century and helped steer post-Roman Europe away from barbarism.

Benedictine monks follow three vows, namely: obedience, conversion of life [to chastity and poverty] and stability.

In 1901, the abbey and San Beda College were established on Mendiola Street. In 1926, the Church of the Benedictine monks was completed. Since then, the Benedictines have been unlikely neighbors to politicians and power-brokers who came in and out of Malacañang.

They arrived long before Mendiola Bridge—now called Chino Roces Bridge—earned its historical significance as the avenue of democratic expression. It was a badge defined by endless rallies pitting citizens against the government.

Through all those, the monks have maintained their contemplative ways, surviving the storms and, sometimes, the fury of gunfire during military coups in the 1980s or the siege of Malacañang in 2001.

"We're conditioned to [take] these external forces," Fr. Anscar Chupungco, the school rector, explained in an interview with the Inquirer last Thursday. "We've learned that everything passes, that there are more things that happen than those that happen every day."

Some 35 monks, including postulants and aspirants (those wanting to join the order), currently live in a one-hectare property beside the San Beda campus.

Located near Malacañang, it's secluded from the "outside world," the way monasteries are supposed to be, by the neo-Gothic walls of the abbey. It's an entirely different world, though not unlike monasteries in medieval Europe.

The serene atmosphere allows monks, like their abbot, Fr. Tarcisio Ma. H. Narciso, to follow the Benedictine way of life—one that is characterized by "daily attentiveness to God."

Benedictines follow the Divine Office or a set of prayers said during specific times of the day. It begins with lauds in the morning, ending with vespers (evening prayer) and compline (night prayer).

A beautiful part of the prayers is the alternate singing of the Psalms in the Chapter room facing the courtyard or the Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat. Chapter refers to the gathering of members of the religious community.

BENEDICTINE /A4

A BRIDGE (MENDIOLA) TOO NEAR the gates of the 105-year-old Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat spans the tumultuous temper of our time.

A1
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

CEBU CITY: Sunny and cooler Monday with four-month dusk rain with scattered showers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rain showers in Mindanao due mostly to the afternoon to evening convection. Source: Pagasa

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Now, GMA woos military wives

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AFTER WOOING THE SOLDIERS WITH HIGHER pay, better equipment and housing, President Macapagal-Arroyo is now going after their wives with offers of loans to start small-scale businesses to augment their income.

"What you need is passion, hard work and persistence to be successful in business," said the President in her address to military wives during her visit yesterday to the Metrocenter Inn hotel in the Philippine Army base.

The Presidency noted that her speeches at the fete along with Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz and the military top brass led by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga and Army chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon was proof of the importance the government attaches to the welfare and needs of the soldiers and their families.

The President encouraged the military wives to avail themselves of soft government loans for small-scale businesses as long as they were sure that their businesses would yield more than the cost of their loans.

The President also offered the military wives a chance to run "Tindahan Natin" and "Bentang Gulay" outlets nationwide. These stores, official outlets for subsidized commodities such as rice and noodles, and low-priced drugs, provide their owners with sizable margins, according to Cabinet officials.

Cruz said the government would announce a major agricultural project that would utilize idle military land with the produce to be marketed by the government.

Nigerian welcomed the President's move to face the military wives because it showed her sincerity in helping the soldiers ease their families' travels while they risked their lives for the country.

The low-day business feasibility study was organized by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship led by businessman Jose Concepcion III, presidential consultant for entrepreneurship.

Aside from franchise opportunities, the group provides the military wives with face-to-face counseling sessions for free and forums on microfinancing.

The special fair for the military wives came on the heels of the President's recent announcement of major housing projects.

Meanwhile, Malacañang appears to have indefinitely put on hold the oft-delayed dialogue with soldiers which was meant to address the growing restiveness in the military.

Instead, the Palace has endorsed a proposal to limit the authority of the Commission on Appointments in the confirmation of military officers as a step to depoliticizing the military.

Cruz said Malacañang has decided to undertake a more "selective" approach by holding a survey before the President sits down to face-to-face dialogue with soldiers.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said the Palace would implement a more discreet system in which soldiers would be asked to place their complaints in a sealed envelope which would then be addressed by an internal committee. "It's the soldiers would go to a confessional and say all their gripes," said Defensor.

Only after those measures were made would the Palace consider holding the presidential dialogue, said Defensor.

Defensor had been previously tapped to head the face-to-face dialogue with the soldiers, which was supposed to have taken place as early as two weeks ago.

Malacañang announced the planned dialogue a day after the President lifted the state of national emergency which she imposed last Feb. 24 to foil an alleged coup attempt.

The dialogue, however, has been delayed by differences on what topics should be discussed and who would be allowed attend the sessions with the President.

CHA-CHA HITS THE ROAD. Members of Bigas ng Bayan make their way in a motorcade through the narrow streets of Sta. Ana, Manila, during a demonstration yesterday in support of amending the Philippine Constitution by a people's initiative. YOY LUCIO

Senga still mum on report on generals

WHILE THE PUBLIC HAS YET TO get a glimpse of the military fact-finding report that was supposed to look into the alleged involvement of certain generals in the "Hello Garci" poll fraud scandal, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga has so good as branded the report as "no big deal."

Senga said the report turned in by a five-man board led by Navy chief Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga looked into the military's performance of its duties during the May 2004 national elections after being requested by the Commission on Elections.

Senga approved the so-called Mayuga report before it was forwarded to Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. last month, but chose to keep mum when pressed about specific allegations against generals mentioned in damaging tagged conversations during the tabulating in the presidential elections.

Senga continued to duck questions about the reasons for keeping the Mayuga board's findings under wraps in the face of widespread belief that the coup plotters thus the military was involved in a conspiracy to rig the elections in President Macapagal-Arroyo's favor.

Sidestepping the question of whether the Mayuga report would help bring back the public's trust in the military leadership, Senga said the investigation was merely fact-finding.

"What Vice Admiral Mayuga submitted is a fact-finding report to determine the actions that the Armed Forces of the Philippines rendered during the elections. In other words, [the report was about] how the AFP performed during [the] elections. In other words, [the report was about] how the AFP performed during elections," Senga said last week in a text appearance at screen shots.

"It's about the conduct of elections," he stressed without providing details about the report.

The "Hello Garci" tapes of voter fraud recorded a man believed to be former Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano as telling a woman believed to be the President that he was coordinating with a General Esperon and a General Ilyandar to remain a General Gudani when the man suspected of being instrumental in the opposition.

"Garcillano" also blamed a General Philippines for allegedly pressuring the recount of election results in Basilan.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Hector Gepon Esperon was deputy commander of the 600% task force for bomber, security and peacekeeping Gen. Gudani, while retired Lt. Gen. Ilay Ilyandar was the AFP Southern Command chief during the elections.

Retired Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, who was head of Task Force Ilonggo at the time, underwent seven months in September after he testified about election irregularities in Lanao del Sur.

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In 1st Mass, Rosales thanks his 2 fathers

By Jerome Aning

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO CARDINAL Rosales yesterday thanked two "fathers" during the first Mass he celebrated as the country's new "Prince of the Church."

In a speech he gave at the end of the Mass, Rosales expressed gratitude to his biological father, Godofredo, for allowing him to follow his priestly vocation—albeit after much persuasion—in 1947.

Rosales also thanked his spiritual father, Pope Benedict XVI, for entrusting the Philippines' "special role" in the evangelization of Asia.

As cardinal, the archbishop said he could now "listen and take part in the discussion on the Church's needs and issues worldwide, and offer advice."

Standing room only

Rosales was greeted with applause when he entered the Manila Cathedral in Intramuros, Manila, at 10 a.m. and donned his purple liturgical vestments in one of the side chapels. It was also the first time for his countrymen to see him wearing the distinctive red cape of a cardinal.

VIPs, clergymen, Catholic school students, members of lay groups and relatives of the archdiocese filled the cathedral's 3,500 seats. Hundreds of others heard Mass standing outside the cathedral.

Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal and about 30 bishops, including those coming from the Manila Metropolitan See's suffragan dioceses: Imus, Antipolo, Malolos, Novaliches, Cubao, Caloocan, Pasig and Parañaque, concelebrated the Mass.

Vidal, who delivered the homily, underscored the role of a cardinal as a representative not only of his diocese but of his country within the Roman Catholic Church.

Dying seed

Vidal also lectured against selfishness, discussing the metaphor used by Jesus Christ on the rewards of self-negation: "Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest," he said, quoting John 12:24 from the Bible.

"Dying like the seed means letting go of our personal interests... yes, even the valid and legitimate aspirations—so that something greater might emerge from our act of self-sacrifice," Vidal said. "It means letting go of what we want for ourselves, so that the broken pieces of our dreams may form the scaffolds of a grander vision."

The Cardinal's list even included President Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies, as well as opposition politicians, both groups sitting in separate pews during the Mass.

Although Vidal did not make any direct allusions, he said the metaphor of the dying seed could be used "for our discernment as a nation."

Pope's message

Rosales was applauded after sharing the Pope's personal message to the country.

"[Pope Benedict] said 'the Philippines has a special role in the evangelization of the Orient.' He mentioned this twice in our four encounters during the consistory," said Rosales, who was in the Vatican last week.

The cardinal said Pope Benedict was the third Pope, after John Paul II and Paul VI, to remind the predominantly Roman Catholic Filipinos "of our calling and responsibility to give the noble cultures of Asia a witness of our faith, even from where we are now, with the quality of our social, economic, political and religious life."

Underneath the challenge to the Filipinos' Christian vocation, Rosales said, is "a call to unity in the manner of our witnessing, and a challenge to collaborate sacrificial effort to make our society true communities of believers, eliminating injustice and inequalities that deny anyone a dignified life."

"That is ... our mission. And Asia is looking to us for light which already we have received in Christ," he added.

The Mass was also attended by Vice President Noli de Castro, Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, other lawmakers and Cabinet members.

Other prelates present included Agnanzio Sanchez, chair of Zamboanga Archbishop and Federation of Asian Bishops Conference president Orlando Quevedo, Bishop Teresa Camacho of Saipan in the Northern Marianas and Manila Archbishop Emeritus Jaime Cardinal Sin.

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Correction

IN THE MARCH 31 ISSUE, the list of bar topnotchers on page A25 misnamed the school from which 19th placer Oscar Herrera graduated. Herrera is a graduate of the then Divine Word College—not UP-Tacloban's Philsci.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in reporting to the Ops Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 4th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, Zip No. 1207-47-02 fax), e-mail address: dunlad@inquirer.com.ph.

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THEY ARE IN THE WORLD but are not of the world, Abbot Tarcisio Mo. Narciso explains the Benedictine way of work and prayer. VINCENT CRUZ

Benedictine monks live on edge of seat of power, witness history

Turn to page A11

The routine is part of the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, a text many disciplinarians during his time. It essentially calls on followers to live a balanced, disciplined life devoted to the sanctification of man and the glorification of God through prayer and work.

"It seems, it may soon loving because you do the same things [every day]," says Narciso, while giving the lessons a tone of the monastery. "But you get to establish roots, a pattern—and things become orderly."

Make no mistake about the Benedictines. Living behind the abbey's walls doesn't mean they are detached from the world, particularly from the politics that color Mendiola Bridge.

The Benedictines were there when tens of thousands of Filipinos marched on Edsa to oust the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, according to Chupungco.

Fr. Bernardo Perez, his predecessor, once found himself marching in the middle of Mendiola, justifying anti-Marcos protesters.

Breakaway group?

There was also a time during one of many coups against the Aquino administration when a rocket-propelled grenade grazed the wall of the monastery, narrowly missing the monks' rooms. They've often been reminded by their own close shave.

Narciso remembers a funny story about how the monks, isolated as they were in the monastery, almost ran into supporters of the late dictator. That was in the last days of the Marcos dictatorship when soldiers with white headbands were marching in front of San Sebastian church to Malacañang.

From the windows of the abbey, the monks displayed yellow banners to welcome the troops and what they thought was the restoration of democracy.

"All the while, we thought they belonged to the breakaway group because of the headbands," the abbot recalls. "To our surprise, they were Marcos loyalists. So we pulled out the banners as quickly as we could."

Hours later, Narciso and the other monks would gratefully save the lives of this same group of Marcos soldiers.

Peacemaker

An officer knocked on the convent gates, asking if they could be allowed inside. An angry mob was nearing Mendiola and God knew what could happen if they clashed with a small but heavily armed band of soldiers, the monks realized.

The monks led the soldiers inside and brought them to the covered basketball court.

"Fine enough, people came looking for them and the security guard just denied their presence," Narciso says. "Had they gotten to the soldiers, there would have been bloodshed."

The Benedictines again opened their doors on Labor Day in 2001 when loyalists of Joseph Estrada—many of whom were mobsters carrying batons—attacked Malacañang.

The loyalists had been tear-gassed, their eyes stinging and their faces red and they had nowhere to go. They knocked on the abbey gates and the monks allowed them in and even served them sandwiches and juice.

No innocent request

It's during times like today's raging political turmoil that monks tend to pray more intensely and get "rooted" in the community they've sought.

The abbot, however, laments a recent incident wherein they inadvertently allowed themselves to be used by a politician.

Narciso was lecturing before a class of novices when he got a call from the security general downstairs. A member of the Black and White movement, a group demanding the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo, was asking if he could be allowed to pray at the Abbey church.

Narciso acceded only to find out that it was an innocent request. A pack of reporters and cameramen, all escorted by armed policemen, gamered into the church to cover and take pictures of one or two protesters praying.

The incident would later be announced as a triumph for the anti-Arroyo movement. It was the first time that militants got past the foot of Mendiola Bridge after the President, accused of cheating in the 2004 elections, had declared the area a "no-rally zone."

Moral values

"If you want to pray, pray in silence," Narciso says. "Why have your picture taken? What's the point? If you're going to use the church for political purposes, why not just go elsewhere?"

He says it's not an issue of siding with or going against the entrenched President. Rather, it's about what's happening around them and each month has his own opinion. In fact, the "Hello Garci" controversy erupts up during informal conversations in the dorms, Narciso says.

He says the monks prefer to follow the guidance of the Catholic bishops which have served as nurturing moral values in public life.

Involved and focused

Involving oneself in political issues is not a speck in the application of the Benedictine vow of "stability." Narciso says it broadly refers to a monk's rootedness in a specific community.

"We are in the world but not of the world," he explains. "Our values must be of Christ but you don't segregate yourself from the world. You learn to live with the people."

In the case of the Benedictines in the country, their main application of labore is in education. They run three schools, one on Mendiola Street and one each in Tanay and Malaya.

"We are involved in the world in a more focused way," says Chupungco.

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MOTHERLAND SON REUNITED. Manila to die for: the former Lorenz, Socorro Victoria Aydinan in Melbourne watched our Marikina's grade school graduation on the Aussie widescreen and cant bite the tummy to join her Down Under as adoring gift for the class valedictorian. CONNIE VELASCO

1st in RP: Mom watches son on Web . . .

From page A1

graduate scholarship at the Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia, his core and a half years ago.

After making quick computations, she realized that the rest of the trip would be too steep, and if she did decide to attend her son's graduation rites, anyway, she would have to rethink immediately the whole university, where she is in the think of mid-semester class work.

Fortunately, during a practice session a week before graduation day, Socorro's son, Marikina Gabriel, was informed by his teachers that the ceremony graduation ceremonies would have a live webcast.

It was to be a first in any Philippine university, and the grade school graduation on March 23 would be the pilot event.

Thrilled, the boy immediately phoned his mother to inform her.

'That's my son!'

On the appointed day in Melbourne, Socorro could not contain her excitement and made sure that all her friends around the live webcast tuned in.

"I knew, 'That's my son! That's my son!' I was literally jumping with joy. I was on the verge of tears even, but tears for proud to cry," she said in an e-mail interview.

Socorro said the recorded Marikina graduation program, including the speech in Filipino on her videocam. She said the boy would have wanted the seventh grade and delivering that speech itself he agreed to some switches to Australia last year.

"It was a very overwhelming emotional experience," she said. "I couldn't sleep that night. I kept replaying [the webcast] over and over. I took the greatest most-to mark. This is one of the best moments the Aydinan has contributed to."

4 days

The webcast was coordinated by the Internet Administrator Aiden Crater for Association of the Marikina Schools, the Computer Network Group, and Mercer Communications Group in Marikina.

It screened four days of graduation ceremonies, each lasting an average of three hours, in the grade school, high school and graduate and undergraduate levels of the Loyola Schools.

Webcasting is a breakout in recording of an event over the Internet while it is. In July 2004, Marikina also provided the live webcast of Hidi Garza 4 of the Hertz Conference Hands between the crowd-favorite Barangay Aladdin Bingo and the Red Bull Raiders.

The technology can also be used for distance education.

According to the organizers, the graduation webcast received feedback from the Philippine island 60 percent), the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan, China, Singapore, Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.

It averaged 200 unique hits (individual computers that accessed the website).

Bringing people together

"The success that the quality of the service was good. It also means that we were able to bring people together," said Dr. Marcelo Bautista, director for educating at the Loyola Schools Center.

The Aydinan family would agree.

SC asked to hold Comelec in contempt

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME COURT SHOULD RAISE THE Commission on Elections' opinion why it should not be cited in contempt for "flagrantly disobeying" the tribunal's 1997 ruling that a people's initiative cannot be undertaken without an enabling law, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel said yesterday.

"This is the most unproblematic and clear-cut procedure to settle once and for all the legality or the administration's illegal move to revise the Constitution and overhaul the system of government before it gets out of hand," said the former administration senator.

Pimentel also said the tribunal should immediately stop the Comelec from verifying the signatures that were supposedly collected in support of the people's initiative to amend the 1987 Constitution.

He said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. and the commissioners should be ordered to explain their actions "so that respect for our institutions and processes, including that of the Supreme Court, is not undermined."

'Recidivist Comelec'

"We cannot have a recidivist Comelec that openly and habitually defies Supreme Court decisions," Antonio said.

He said the high court had "bravely and patiently defended" in Santiago vs. Comelec that the Law (Republic Act No. 6735) being invoked to justify the moves drive for a people's initiative was "inadequate to cover the system of initiative on amendments to the Constitution."

He also said the high court had specifically declared that "the Comelec should be permanently enjoined from entertaining or taking cognizance of any petition for initiative on amendments to the Constitution until a sufficient law shall have been validly enacted to provide for the implementation of the system."

"That is the ruling and, unless overturned, it is the law. You cannot defy the Supreme Court," Antonio said.

"But it seems the executive [branch] is bent on defying settled decisions of the court. They're acting as if there is no Supreme Court," he said.

Inhibition of justices

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, also of the administration, said incumbent Supreme Court justices aspiring to become chief justice later this year should inhibit themselves from any case involving Chairman Abalos.

Santiago said unbiased law associations should note such an inhibition to underscore the integrity of the tribunal.

Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban is due for retirement in December.

"Out of delicadeza, any incumbent justice who wishes to be appointed to the vacancy should inhibit himself or herself from any case involving Chairman Abalos," Santiago said in a statement.

She said it would be unethical for a justice to vote in favor of Chairman Abalos because President Macapagal-Arroyo, the appointing power, had already endorsed the amendment of the 1987 Constitution through a people's initiative.

"If a justice votes in favor of Chairman Abalos gets appointed as chief justice, the public will suspect that the justice cast a vote, not out of conviction, but out of political accommodation," Santiago said.

"This will affect the credibility of the Supreme Court," she said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. agreed with the view.

"The problem [of chief justice] could become a burgeoning clip. So out of delicadeza, they should inhibit themselves," he said.

No change in facts

Santiago, a recognized constitutional law expert, also said the 4 Tribunal had "no acceptable legal basis" for reversing its ruling in Santiago vs Comelec.

"In reversing a previous ruling, the Supreme Court found by the number of justices voting for or against the issue in the prior case, but by the issue of whether the facts have changed," she said, adding:

"The facts have not changed."

Santiago says the petitioners in the case knowing her vote would be against, urged her to inhibit herself. But the fellow petitioners were Alexander Padilla, now health undersecretary, and Maribel Ongsiu, a civic leader.

Although an administration source, Santiago appears any move to reverse the ruling in Santiago vs Comelec, which everyone consider to be a landmark case.

"To reverse the Santiago ruling will be to court disaster in terms of public opinion," she said.

Meralco monopoly over . . .

From page A1

the Philippines which has one of the highest electricity rates in Asia.

In a joint statement, Energy Secretary Raphael M. Lotilla and National Economic and Development Authority Secretary General Romulo Neri said the government was expecting the "competitive market rate."

"We anticipate that this offer and its acceptance will help enable the industrial sector to avail of the lower time-of-use (TOU) rates of the National Power Corp., help reduce the cost of doing business in the Meralco franchise area, promote investment and the creation of productive jobs, and help push private investment forward," Lotilla and Neri said.

Finalize in 3 weeks

Lotilla and the President had directed Kapunan and the National Transmission Corp. to finalize the details and mechanics of the new arrangement with Meralco within two weeks.

The scheme would be implemented immediately after the Energy Regulatory Commission approved of its details and mechanics.

"We are looking forward to meeting with Kapunan and Transco as directed, having the topics to be discussed to the draught to the stockholders' power producers," Meralco president and chief operating officer Jesus Francisco said.

The Lopez family-which owns Meralco also controls a number of IPPs which would now have to compete with other power suppliers.

Lotilla said Meralco's partial open access scheme would have a positive impact not only on investors, but also on the government's efforts to privatize Napocor's generation assets.

He explained that the new arrangement would create a new market for potential buyers of Napocor plants that would be placed on the auction block.

'Big sacrifice'

"This is an excellent deal for Meralco consumers and export manufacturers," said Lotilla. "This is a big sacrifice for Meralco which is assuming an odd-sale stranded contract amounting from a P31 billion refund while having another P16 billion refund."

Lotilla said that while facing competition, the deal would have a liberating effect on the Napocor to move on. "Just like EGAT overcame reluctance to privatize and moved from a P70 billion loss in 1997 to P30 billion in 2005," Lotilla said

Drilon cites media, slain journalists

By Philip C. Tubeza

SENATE PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DRILON HAS lauded the news media for refusing to be cowed by the government which is out to "muzzle the truth and silence its bearers," and paid tribute to at least 26 Filipino journalists killed in the last five years.

In a speech to the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) in Makati City on Friday, Drilon denounced attempts by the Arroyo administration to muzzle the press.

"Unless the local media, those journalists who have sacrificed their lives or who have been hurt but continue to serve the truth," Drilon said. The declaration of a state of national emergency through Presidential Proclamation 1017 last month and the "atrocious excess" that followed were meant to woo the people, he added.

"The police raid on The Daily Tribune, for example, was intended not solely as an act of retribution against a critical newspaper but as a warning to all media establishments to behave according to the desires of the powers-that-be," Drilon said.

Drilon noted, however, that even before the proclamation of a state of national emergency, international press organizations like the International Federation of Journalists and Reporters sans Frontiers (Reporters Without Borders) had noted that Filipino journalists were already "paying a high price for their independence."

He recalled that 26 Filipino journalists had been killed "in pursuit of their profession" as recorded by the IFJ, the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Philippine Union of Journalists.

Drilon said six journalists were killed, seven were physically attacked and nine threatened in 2005 alone.

That same year, the IPI World Press Freedom Review emphasized that the "Philippines, one of the freest and most democratic countries in Asia, for the third year in a row is the Asian country with the highest number of journalists murdered in the line of duty." Drilon said.

He said IPI, which had warned that the situation was worsening, "has the impression that the Philippine authorities are unable to accept criticism in media."

Mayor wants station off air

GUIMARAS CITY – THE TOWN MAYOR OF Kibawe, North Cotabato has asked telecommunications authorities to take off the air a radio station reported to be critical of his administration.

A program host of the station slammed the move of Mayor Guevarinda Tan to silence criticism by censoring the press.

"I'm being critical of my administration in only the issues," said Tan, referring to 101.1FM radio, an affiliate of dxBH of the Manila Broadcasting Corp.

"The request for a suspension order has been referred to the National Telecommunications Commission because of some complaints but the station has no permit to operate and is operating as a community service station in the area," Tan said.

Boy Anchetta, the station's news and public affairs program host, said Tan's action was repressive.

He said the mayor's action was aimed at "silencing the media in Kibawan," and demand allegations the station was operating illegally.

"Our permit to operate as a satellite station of MBC in South Cotabato was issued by the NTC," Anchetta said.

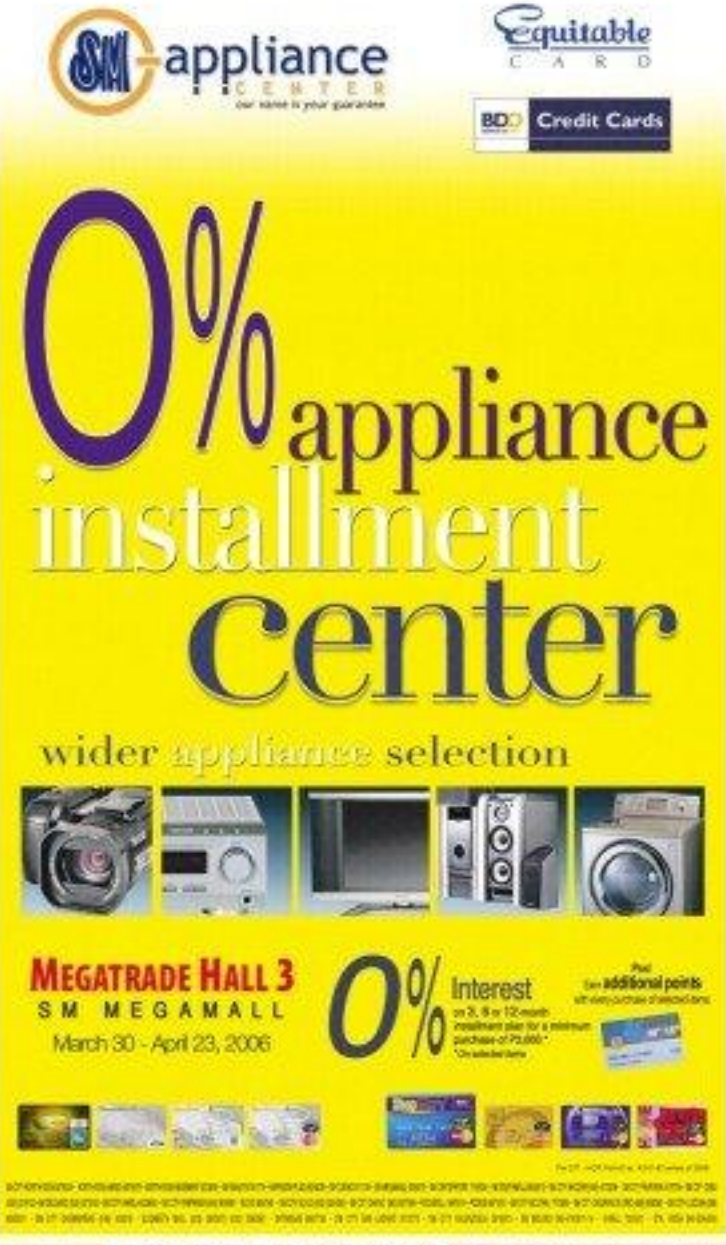
"Putting us off-air for an indefinite period is a clear suppression of press freedom. It appears that the mayor doesn't want to hear the complaints of the people about his governance. That's why she wanted us program manager suspended for the station's operations."

Tan rejected Anchetta's claims, saying the co-operated first-opened.

"Even if comments were adversarial to my administration, I welcome them in the name of freedom and democracy," she said.

Tan said her request for NTC intervention was based on complaints from residents.

Charito C. Salinas, PIN Mindanao Bureau



3 Filipinos killed in Bahrain named; 1 remains missing

By Nikko Dizon

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN Affairs has released the names of three Filipinos who were among those who drowned when a passenger boat capsized off Bahrain, and Presidente Macapagal-Arroyo directed the foreign office to help the victims' families in the repatriation of their bodies.

DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque identified the fatalities in a text message to reporters in Sarsuan Estando, Edwin Felipe Bautista and Quennie Abalonia Ouano. They earlier reported missing. The other one has not been identified.

"The search for the one other missing Filipino crew member continues," Asuque said.

Seven other Filipinos survived, including three who were treated in a Bahrain hospital for minor injuries, he said.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a press statement that the President had consulted with the families of the Filipino victims.

"She has instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs to keep a tight watch on ongoing rescue operations to ascertain the condition of Filipinos who may have been aboard the cruiser boat before it sank. She has also asked the DFA to extend assistance to the families of the three victims, particularly in the repatriation of the bodies of the victims," said Bunye.

Asuque said that the exact number of Filipinos aboard the boat had yet to be established.

"As of now, we have 11 Filipinos in our record, seven of whom survived, three were killed and one remains missing. The identification of the nationals on board the boat is based on the manifest," Asuque said in a phone interview.

Thirty-eight died in all, including the three Filipinos, drowned after the boat capsized and sank.

Americans and Bahraini officials had said there was no indication the sinking was the result of an attack.

Officials in Bahrain said 129 people were on board the Al-Dana – mostly foreigners, including Britons, Americans, Germans, Indians, South Africans and Egyptians – when it sank.

Authorities in Bahrain have detained and were questioning the boat's captain, an Indian national, who they said was unqualified. The traditional wooden dhow was said to have been overloaded with passengers attending a corporate party.

"The captain was only a sailor and not qualified to operate the ship. The prosecution's office has detained him and his assistant," prosecutor Nawaf Hatoka told reporters in Manama Friday.

Navy ships helped by the US Navy's 5th Fleet pulled 67 survivors from the water. More than 30 people were taken to hospital. Most have been discharged. With reports from Gil C. Cabunoc-gan Jr. and Reuters

No Pinoys there

SOME OF THE ESTIMATED 950 Filipinos working in Iran were hurt in the powerful earthquake that killed at least 78 people in western Iran on Friday, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

"It's a very remote place. No Filipinos go there," DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque said.

He said Filipinos in Iran usually worked in places where oil facilities and hospitals are located.

About 1,265 were injured in the tremor that wiped out villages, Agence France-Presse reported. With reports from AFP

THE PHILIPPINE and US flags fly in the breeze during yesterday's reenactment of the Allied Doll Landing during World War II in Legazpi City. MARLEAN CHAVEZ/CONTRIBUTOR

Liberation of Bicol during WWII recalled

By Edgar Aloja
Phil Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY — AMID CLOUDS of sand and water kicked up by thunderous salvoes from four warships in the distance, dozens of "US Marines" waded ashore and engaged an equal number of Japanese soldiers" in a brief skirmish. In a few more minutes, as the enemy retreated inland, the rapture of the beach in Barangay Bawis was complete.

And so was the reenactment of Legazpi City's Liberation Day 61 years ago, when an American expedition landed here. Albay Gov. Joey Salceda and, with the help of Filipino guerrillas, recaptured the city from the Japanese Imperial Forces.

The reenactment, performed by the Naval Forces in Southern Luzon in cooperation with the Air Force and the Marines Polytechnic Colleges Foundation, was part of Saturday's commemoration of the 61st anniversary of the US Landing in Legazpi.

The reenactment was meant to impress on present-day Filipinos the courage of their forebears so they too, would rise above failure and defeat, Bicolnon Band Band said in his message.

"We are prepared to bleed for the love of freedom," Band said. "Let's liberate ourselves from the complexity of our problems through the spirit and unity shown by our forefathers so that we, too, could overcome difficulties."

The rites, which paid tribute to veterans of the Joint Forces of the Philippine Guerrilla Forces Owen Plans) and the Allied American Forces (Ian Plan) that liberated Legazpi, were led by the Commissioner on Filipino Heroes and Culture at the Legazpi Gulf Landing Monument.

Jesus Terry Alfonso, provincial administrator for veterans affairs, called the reenactment "heroes of our race" ones to be acknowledged. Clint Cie Bicolanos who were still fighting some Sul Bon.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, secretary of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP), Jess Dominguez chapter, recalled that they were the ones who met the American heroes on the beach.

He said there were about 300 of them who trained say with the Americans named Kapamilyan Hill along where they engaged Japanese troops in a long firefight till they were in Binanuang, Ouraja, Albay.

But it was in Barangay Rawis that is Gamalig town where the Japanese finally surrendered, he said.

Rosalio Rasmale, 79, also of Sto. Domingo town, said that since the married guerrillas were discouraged by their wives from going, Isabelitas like him were the ones who brushed elbows with the Americans in the fight against the Japanese.

Maj. James Stevenson, US Marines Defense Office attache, who represented new US Ambassador Kristie Anne Kenney as guest speaker, lauded the enduring alliance between the US and the Philippines.

Pinay caregiver in Canada to stay and fight deportation

By Nikko Dizon

A FILIPINO CAREGIVER, WHO was given until today by Canadian immigration authorities to leave the country, has decided to stay put and instead challenge the order of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) office, a Canada-based migrant worker advocacy group said yesterday.

Estrella Ilarmo, who has been working as a live-in caregiver in Canada for less than two years, has decided not to go home to the Philippines, Glory Ouano, vice chair of MIGS, the national organization of Filipino migrant workers in Canada, told the business in an interview still yesterday.

Ouano said that Ilarmo, a 40-year-old mother of two girls, was a victim of bureaucracy in Canada and the failure of the Canadian government to provide exhaustive information for live-in caregivers on their stay in the country.

According to Ilarmo, Ilarmo arrived in Canada in May 2004 and worked for one year as a live-in caregiver taking care of two children for a Vancouver family.

After the family no longer needed her services, Ilarmo actively sought employment to do so.

She did find another employer but the job didn't materialize. Then she got another job offer. This time, she and her prospective employer submitted to the CIC all the necessary documents," Ouano said.

However, due to processing delays, Ilarmo was not re-issued a valid working permit and lost her employment in Canada.

"Live-in caregivers under CIC's Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) are required to hold a valid working permit issued by CIC which is good for one year and to the fact live-in caregivers to working for only one employer," Ilillah said.

Ouano said the LCP manual states that caregivers are allowed to change employers under the three-year limit and Ilarmo was very entitled to do so.

"Imelda should not be deported because she did her part and looked for employers. The inconsistency delayed the processing of her papers," Ouano said.

By Interview, April 2, Ilarmo manifested her intention to consider "out of status," Ouano said.

Ilarmo has another 30 days until "a removal action by the police or immigration authorities" is implemented, Ouano said.

Ilarmo and Ouano and Illillah had asked the CIC to review Ilarmo's case.

"If our request is denied, we will apply for a 'humanitarian compassionate' consideration for her because her abusive ex-husband is still in the Philippines," Ouano said.

Gov't overshoots tourist target

By Jaronne Arning

FINAL STATISTICS RELEASED Friday by the Department of Tourism confirmed that the government has surpassed its target of 2.6 million foreign visitors in 2005.

DOT assistant secretary for planning and promotions Edwin de Jesus Jr. said the increase in the country in 2005 registered an all-time high of 2,843,083 arrivals, or 14.5 percent more compared to 2004's 2,291,352.

"The strong performance of the industry was a result of heightened marketing campaigns, sales missions, and international media exposure of the country, as well as the influx of visitors during the holiday season," de Jesus said in a report to Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano.

December visitors – accounting for a record-breaking monthly arrival count of 280,308 – as well contributes avoiding the recession-like effects of the SARS in the early months of 2003 also contributed to improve the arrivals numbers.

For this year, DOT is counting on the opening of the Kitsay Aquino International Terminal 2 to help reach its target of 3.mil-lion inbound tourists. Durano told a bigger airport means more inbound flights and, therefore, more tourists.

Aquino said the launching of Philippine Airlines flights to Beijing, China, has provided additional seats for Chinese tourists, boosting arrivals from the Philippines' fastest growing tourist market.

Although the China market ranked only 08th in terms of visitor volume, the 107,408 Chinese tourists who came to the Philippines last year represented a whopping 173.0 percent increase over the number registered in 2004.

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Tragedy tempers 1st Mass rites

LIMASAWA ISLAND, SOUTHERN LEYTE – Simple rites marked the 485th anniversary of the First Mass on this island in deference to the tragedy that occurred in Guimaguan, St. Bernard, a month and a half ago that left some 1,000 people dead.

Limasawa Mayor Albert Enclonado said the town decided to cancel the festivities as a "sign of our respect for the victims of the tragedy."

A food retailer near the Shrine of the Holy Cross where the celebratory Mass presided over by Bishop Precioso Cantillas was held, noted that only a few people attended the celebration.

She said the visitors were fewer by half than those who came for last year's celebration.

This year's commemoration deviated from the usual activity showcasing the historical and cultural value of Limasawa Island and instead centered on remembering the victims of the Feb. 17 Guimaguan landslide.

Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia, the affair's guest speaker, said she was humbled by the invitation to speak at this particular time.

"I was humbled for this is no ordinary time. Not for Limasawa, and for the province of Southern Leyte, [which is still] reeling from that unspeakable tragedy of which we are still finding the words to describe, of which the whole world cannot seem to make sense of."

"Thankfully, history speaks to us in stories... 485 years later, the message of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass first held here resounds with greater meaning in Southern Leyte." Ami Arroyo, PDI Visayas Bureau

E Visayas grads can't find jobs

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY – THE COMMISSION ON Higher Education in Eastern Visayas revealed that out of the 5,000 to 10,000 who graduate from college in the region yearly, only a measly two percent are able to land jobs immediately.

The vast majority have to wait longer to find employment. Worst, some end up not having able to find jobs at all.

Domingo Genciana, CHED-8 education supervisor II, said this sad state of affairs was due mainly to the lack of jobs in Eastern Visayas.

"There are too many job opportunities in the region for the thousands who graduate every year," Genciana told the Inquirer.

Genciana said the assessment was based on the "informal surveys" they conduct regularly in the different tertiary schools in the region.

Fidel Pajeon, regional director of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), said the region's unemployment rate was high.

Based on DOLE-8 records, Eastern Visayas has one-nine percent unemployment. Most of the workforce in the region, one of the most depressed in the country, are in the agriculture sector.

With the lack of jobs, Genciana said, college graduates had resorted to small-scale businesses, like the buying and selling of goods.

"While we do not disagree with their decision to go into business, we still somewhat believed that they were not able to make use of what they had learned in college," the CHED official said.

Others, Genciana said, seek employment outside the region, mostly in Metro Manila and overseas.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, April 2, 2006
5th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

A new covenant

The time is coming...it is Yahweh who speaks—when I will forge a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah. It will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. For they broke my covenant although I was their Lord.

This is the covenant I shall make with Israel after that time, I will put my Law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.

And they will not have to teach one another, neighbor to brother, saying: 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the poorest to the lowliest, for I will forgive their wrongdoing and no longer remember their sin.

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5:7-9

He learned obedience

Christ, in the days of his mortal life, offered his entreaties with cries and tears. His prayer to him who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his humble submission. Although he was Son, he learned through suffering what obedience was; and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for those who obey him.

Gospel: John 12:20-33

Hour of Jesus

There were some Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem to worship during the feast. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went to Andrew and the two of them told Jesus.

Then Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

"Those who love their life destroy it, and those who despise their life in this world keep it for everlasting life.

"Whoever wants to serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

"Now my soul is in distress. Shall I say: 'Father, save me from this hour'? But, I have come to this hour for this purpose; glorify your Name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again."

People standing there heard something and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel was speaking to him." Then Jesus declared, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the ruler of this world is to be cast down. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all to myself." With these words Jesus referred to the kind of death he was to die.

Commentary

Jesus spoke hope for a new covenant written on hearts, not of stone this time, but flesh and blood. And will how his people and they will be able to know God intimately from the least to the greatest. Jesus is this covenant—obedience itself—even to suffering. And it is one who will seal the promise of Jesus through Philip's intervention. Jesus proclaims that he, the Son of Man, just today of the nations, the land of God, will be lifted up, crucified, and yet he will live to raise the glory up the faithful. In order servants of God and as are to be God's servants. The hour of dying and rising approaches. We, with Jesus, cannot avoid it. And in facing death, judgment comes upon the world, and it is no selfishness all to himself. It is for us to be to those in the cross together with Jesus.

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Naia 3 mishap won't deter airlines

By Nikko Dizon

DESPITE THE COLLAPSE OF A CEILING AT the new Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, domestic and international airlines will not move out of the facility as long as the government ensures its safety and certified the legal hassles it is facing.

"The incident won't make us shy away from pursuing the opening of Terminal 3," said Ed Monreal, an airline executive and vice chair of the Airline Operators Council (AOC), in an interview.

The AOC is the organization of local and international airlines operating out of Naia Terminal 3.

Different tale

Monreal said it would have been a different story if it was a part of the structural framework that collapsed.

"It would be tough if it were a column or the floor or a portion of the building that stood in," he said, citing an incident two years ago at the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris where part of the terminal building collapsed.

"Majority of us will want to transfer to Naia 3. We're only waiting for the outcome of the contract issue. We hope Terminal 3 is opened. It's something we Filipinos can't be proud of, and it would be a better terminal to work in," Monreal said.

Congested terminal

He said Naia 3 was becoming more congested, what with new airlines recently allowed to operate out of the two-decade-old terminal.

"For example, the efficiency of the check-in counters at Terminal 3 is no longer maximized, which affects our operations. There is no more room for expansion," Monreal said.

Naia 3 was designed to accommodate 15 million passengers annually.

For his part, Leonardo Balajadia, AOC chairman, urged the government to "look into the [airport] problems" of the Naia 3 building.

Eye-opener

"The government should concentrate on the safety and security aspects of the airport. [The] ceiling collapse [was] an eye-opener for all of us," Balajadia said.

"We should look beyond the immediate for the opening of the new Naia, the publicity the controversies," he added.

For his part, businessman Jesus Lucio Tan has extended his offer of P300 million (P16.3 billion) to complete the project, allowing Asia's Emerging Dragon Co. (AEDC), the consortium of which he is a member, to operate Naia 3.

AEDC lawyer Herbert Tiong said in a separate interview that Tan offer was pursuant to the government's build-operate-transfer (BOT) program under which Naia 3 was built.

After the Supreme Court nullified the government's contract with Chinese-Philippine International Air Terminals Co., builder of the terminal, the contract should be returned to AEDC being the original proponent of the project," Tiong said the business in a phone interview.

Finance claiming 3000 million as just compensation for Naia 3.

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STL: Money said to be at root of PNP objection

By Leiga A. del Puerto

THE POLICE TIME MANY OBJECtions to the implementation of the Small Town Lottery, the numbers game being promoted by the government as a replacement for its illegal cousin, "jueteng."

But the objections from lawmakers to one issue: Money.

Specifically, the police want to see clear guidelines on how their share of STL earnings, supposedly pegged at the current, would be used, according to a ranking official familiar with the police position on STL.

"Will it be like jueteng, where the commanders spend the money at their own discretion?" the officer said.

The sources for this story requested to be named because they were not authorized to speak on the issue. They held important posts in the Philippine National Police. One of them had been a provincial director.

Where the P5P cracked down on jueteng late last year, the former provincial director said, the local police forces had "suffered" because payoffs from the illegal game had been partly subsidizing their operations.

The officers admitted the police were "very interested" in their share from STL operations. The money would help the police a lot, he said.

The other operations honoring the police after the sudden implementation of STL in some parts of the country, according to the source, were:

- How can the police be sure they will be getting 5 percent?
- From whom will the policy get their share...from the local STL operator or the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, the overseer of the game?
- Will their share go only to the local police forces, or will it also go to the national police? The national police refers to Camp Crame-based officers.

"These are the concerns of the police and the DILG (Department of Interior and Local Government)," the source said.

But another ranking police official said, "Hindi pwede yan (That cannot be)," when he was asked if only the local police forces would be getting a share from STL.

(A local police unit, in fact, received some P150,000 during the STL test run this month, but the national police did not get anything. Quo warranto this, a police general remarked. "Dapat nasa ang may alam sa race (The lucky ones should have been informed of this)."

The senior officer said the way he sees it, the police might have to develop a system to centralize the collection of their shares.

2 alleged carjackers slain in Rizal

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE STOLEN CAR WAS GETTING A FRESH coat of paint so that it could be used for some supposedly criminal operation when the lawmen came. Then shots rang out.

When the firing ended, the seven men apparently repainting the car were dead, bringing to a bloody close an alleged carjacking operation that began at 2:45 a.m. yesterday in Quezon City and ended seven hours later near Barangay Rolling Hills Subdivision in Rodriguez, Rizal.

Two other people were arrested.

"It looked like it was just to neutralize the suspects and shoot them to their feet. But the suspects were firing at the men," Rodriguez police chief Supt. Manuel Plan said, explaining why the two alleged carjackers were killed.

The dead men were still unidentified as of press time. Police said the two had opened fire first and that they recovered two revolvers from the scene.

"We believe the suspects were planning to perpetrate other crimes, like bank robbery or kidnapping, and use the car as a getaway vehicle," Plan told the reporters.

He said his men got wind of the activities of the group when they received information at 5 a.m. that some people were spray painting a car parked on a street in Rodriguez.

Police launched surveillance operations.

The suspects changed locations three times before barricading themselves inside a lot in Barangay Rolling Hills.

Upon the suspects' arrival, the lawmen caught up with them at 9:45 a.m. As the police identified themselves, the cars alleged carjackers opened fire, Plan said.

The gun duel—of multiple gunshots—ensued.

The two others, 19-year-old Renan Juan Bello and James Vitaliano, 23, were taken in for questioning. Bello and Vitaliano denied any involvement with the slain suspects.

Police learned the vehicle was registered with a Teodorico Tantoco Jr. and which was reported stolen by two women and two men in Pag-asa, Quezon City, at 1:45 a.m.

The taxi driver, Albert Jacob, went to the Bicol police and identified the dead man at the time who took his vehicle, Plan said.

Both also identified Bello as one of the two women who flagged down his taxi, police said.

But Bello told the police she was just forced by the suspects to hail the cab. She also said the other woman who flagged down the cab later got off in Payatas.

Vitaliano himself said he did not know the suspects. He said he was riding his motorcycle on his way home from a party when one of the two slain suspects approached him at Rolling Hills.

"He suddenly got on my motorcycle and stood his gun at me. He instructed me to drive the motorcycle to buy yosi," Vitaliano told the reporters.

Later, he said, the suspects pushed him into the taxi while they pointed the vehicle.

It was then that he heard gunshots.

"I stood by [said]. I had done nothing wrong," Vitaliano said in Filipino.

Plan said he was investigating whether Bello and Vitaliano's stories were true.

THIS taxi was getting a new paint job courtesy of two alleged carjackers when the pair were accosted by police in Barangay San Isidro, Rodriguez, Rizal. The paint job was almost finished at the taxi's owner can no longer be seen.

Evidence vs publisher's killer weak – prosecutor

By Armand N. Mercado

A SENIOR PROSECUTOR who was relieved for ordering the dismissal of a murder charge filed against the alleged mastermind in the killing of Gaudencio Tiwaynon Jr. publisher Philip Agustin has denied being biased in ordering that the evidence against the accused was weak.

Special Prosecutor Emmanuel T. Velasco, a former journalist, insisted he was not prepared to pursue Secretary Raul Gonzalez's further investigation of the case to establish the "possible conspiracy" of Department of Justice officials, Bureau of Corrections officials and Mayor Vicente Agustin in Agustin's killing.

Velasco, head of the Department of Justice panel that conducted the preliminary investigation of the case, said Chavit "has never been cleared" of involvement in the killing of Agustin, a broadcaster and publisher of the Dyaryo Filipino.

Acting on the motion for reconsideration filed by Agustin's widow Nena Agustin, Mayor Chavit Singson and other respondents, Velasco said he found no reason to change his findings that the evidence presented by the complainant was weak.

Velasco said he found it "unbelievable" that Chavit would order the killing of Agustin because of a "mere" libel case filed by the latter against the mayor.

Velasco said he was surprised that Gonzalez would order the reinvestigation of the case, which was already terminated, when the latter's predecessor, Secretary Hernando Perez, had already dismissed the charges against Chavit.

Velasco said he was also surprised that Gonzalez would order the reinvestigation of the case when the Court of Appeals had already denied the motion for reconsideration filed by Nena Agustin.

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OPINION

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Destructive politics

GULLIBLEST SOLON MOSCOSO GOT IT EXACTLY right. President Macapagal-Arroyo's use of the term *sunugin* to describe the administration's Charter change strategy has inadvertently revealed its true nature.

"The true power of the people is being felt with the signature campaign to change our form of government," the President had said the other day in a transparent effort to emphasize the distinction between "the people" and the political class. "The old-time politicians of the status quo better stand back because their wishes has left the station. It is time for politicians to stand back or get run over."

The President's curious choice of words reveals an almost murderous glee in the railroading of opposition and sectarians. Old-time politicians? Who must have especially meant those shiny-pericos senators, who have the temerity to insist on irritating inconveniences like the rule of law.

Of course, once again a time, she had famously used the entrenched culture of old-time politics itself as part of the institutional rationalization for the Davidson scandal. In explaining her "lapse in judgment" in calling an election official while canvassing for the 2004 vote was still ongoing, she repeatedly pointed to the degeneration in Philippine politics.

But she had always assumed, in her key statements, that while she was a product of "old-time" politics, she had the privilege of leading the transition to a new political order. Naturally this begs the question: Why does a master of old-time politics get to ride this train, instead of standing by or getting run over?

The real answer, of course, is because she can. In the hot few months, the Arroyo administration has put in place a new, ultimately counter-democratic policy: a way of proceeding which we can summarize in chilling terms. The political tramps the entirely legal or the ethical. If it's within the reach of the so-called art of the possible, it will do. Let the Supreme Court or the people's executive take their sweet time reaching decisions or resolving issues.

It is in this sordid light that Malacañang's deliberately tardy embrace of the politicians' initiative, coursed through haranguing assemblies, makes more sense. The Supreme Court had ruled almost a decade ago that the first attempt at an enabling law for a people's initiative was inadequate. And yet the administration, for whose ranks we must include the nominally independent Commission on Elections) is pushing through with the initiative. Its message is clear: Let the high court play catch-up, if it can.

With the President's endorsement of the so-called "people's initiative" to create an interim parliament, Malacañang's pronestations of non-involvement in the signature campaign turned into earnest exhortations. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, the President's spokesperson, said the time for constitutional change was ripe. "We have achieved economic gains. Let us not lose it through destructive politics."

But Bunye also unburdened himself of an inadvertently revealing cliché: "It is time for us to cross the Rubicon."

The phrase, of course, means to make a crucial decision, to pass a turning point. But again, servant-surveyed master is the curious choice of words.

If Bunye knows his history, he should have known that when Julius Caesar finally crossed the Rubicon, Rome's most famous warrior started a civil war. That war eventually led to the death of the republic and the birth of the Roman empire.

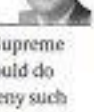
Under Roman law, a commander of a Roman army was banned from crossing the Rubicon river—at that time a border that marked the territory of the city of Rome itself—with the army under his command. The law was meant to protect the capital from falling under the influence of the military. When Caesar finally crossed the Rubicon (according to the histories, that's when he coined the phrase "the die is cast"), his action led directly to civil strife.

The end of "destructive politics"? On the contrary. The momentum the Arroyo administration has generated signals the start of even more political divisiveness. The die is cast. And the stakes are unbearably high.

Your Honors, RSVP

EDITORIAL

SEPARATE OPINION



Joaquin A. Cruz

What the Supreme Court should do is simply deny such motions and consider the laggards in default for their delay

REACTING TO MY COLUMN OF MARCH 4, 2006, a reader apparently relishes my accusation that President Macapagal-Arroyo has abused her military powers and quotes from my book on Philippine Political Law to beat me with my own petard. The quoted portion reads:

"The 'power of the sword' makes the President the most important figure in times of war or other similar emergencies. In theory, he joins all campaigns, establishes all camps and blockades, directs all marches, and fights all battles. His leadership, if bold and decisive, can galvanize the people to gallantry or, if vacillating and timorous, can enfeeble them to defeatism and surrender. It is because the sword must be wielded with courage and resolution that the President is given vast powers in the making of military decisions.

"Accordingly, it has been held that he can determine what degree of force a particular crisis demands, as when President Lincoln declared a blockade of the Confederate ports during the American civil war; organize courts martial for the discipline of the members of the armed forces violating military law; create military commissions for the punishment of war criminals; and call out the armed forces to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion or rebellion."

All correct except that the word "orthodox" was inadvertently replaced with "realistic."

But the discussion was of the military powers of the President in times of war or other similar emergencies. Proclamation No. 1017 but February 24 were not threatened with invasion from a foreign enemy, the local subversives were no more increasing (although hotter) than usual, and what she called a "cabal" or Fort Bonifacio did not have the dimensions of a national emergency.

In fact, President Arroyo lifted her proclamation one week later on the ground that the "emergency" that justified it had abated. She added the reservation, though, that she would issue it again whenever the same fit an commander in chief of the armed forces under her control or something her. Significantly, Congress has not granted her emergency powers under Art. VI, Sec. 23(2) nor has she proclaimed martial law, with all its limitations under Art. VII, Sec. 18, of the Constitution she wants to revise.

Despite the lack of such authorizations, she continues to order warrantless arrests of her supposed enemies, threaten the media, break up peaceful rallies and assemblies, intimidate critics of her administration, even the lawful Senate and House of Representatives, and exercise other arbitrary powers as if we were at war or under a national emergency of her own making.

Proclamation No. 1017 and her earlier Executive Order No. 464 have been under protest for quite a while now before the Supreme Court, which has yet to rule on the constitutional issues raised by the controversial measures. The latest report is that the high tribunal has chided the parties for their repeated motions for extensions of time to file their pleadings but, as I say, granted earlier to this column, what it should do is simply deny such motions and consider the laggards in default for their delay.

Or perhaps, and I say this with due respect, the justices see themselves losing their time to carefully study the pros and cons of the vital constitutional questions before them prior to arriving at a just and fearless decision worthy of the highest court created as the impregnable citadel of law and justice.

Still, considering the lapse of time since the presidential acts were judicially challenged, I should think that the justices should have already thoroughly examined and analyzed the issues before them to be able to resolve them correctly. I know that they have a period of 24 months to do this, but I hope they will not wait until 2008 to rule on the constitutionality of Proclamation No. 1017 and EO No. 464.

Every morning, I wait with trepidation to see if the Supreme is finally reporting that the awaited decisions of the Supreme Court on these cases have been made as long last. Although such a report will make this article obsolete, I am hopeful just the same that such resolution will be rendered soon to appease the tensions and for the information of the anxious public.

Whether the justices will support President Arroyo or invalidate her challenged acts, the Supreme Court will have thereby defined to stand, for the people to accept or reject, through the democratic processes, as the Court of Last Resort. Meanwhile, tempus fugit.

Seeing Jesus

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A BLIND MAN who discovered that his new dog could walk on water. Overjoyed, he invited his neighbor to go with him the following day. Sure enough, the dog would walk on water to retrieve every stick they hit. Unable to contain his excitement, the hunter blurted out, "Did you notice anything unusual about my dog?" After some thought, the neighbor replied: "Yeah, your dog can't swim!"

* * *

In today's Gospel (Jn. 12, 20-33), we are told that some Greeks had gone to Philip with a request to see Jesus. These "outsiders" approached Jesus, while His fellow Jews—the insiders He had performed many miracles and signs—did not and doubted Him. Miracles are all about us, and many signs are given to us, and yet we often miss the point and do not see Jesus.

* * *

People who are focused on themselves can hardly see Jesus. "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life," pitfalls and greedy people find it difficult to accept Jesus and His message of sacrifice and self-denial. How difficult indeed for the rich and those so full of themselves to enter the kingdom of God.

* * *

Powerful people still have a hard time seeing and appreciating Jesus and His message about servanthood. "Whoever serves me must follow me." People who have statuses, money and power at their beck and call hardly find the need to call on Jesus because their sense of security is anchored on the things of this world. Sometimes, it takes tragedies to move these things that give a person a feeling of security in order to make him/her realize his/her folly.

* * *

People who are not submissive to the Divine Will also find it hard to see Jesus. People who have their own agenda in life hardly pay attention or give value to God's agenda on their lives. People who know how to pray "Thy will be done," and who say "Father, glorify your name" are the ones who see Jesus in everything that happens in their lives.

* * *

A young doctor approached me last Monday afternoon to tell me how close he had been to death. He and others were trapped in a burning building. In that helpless situation, he just surrendered everything to the Lord and said "Lord, if you will take me now, please accept me as your kingdom." He told me that he took courage from the words I said during my homily the day before, that it is better to be premature than of God's love than to doubt God's love. Somehow, he said, he was at peace and ready for anything. Well, thank God he lived, but he certainly sees Jesus more clearly now because of his eyeball-to-eyeball experience with death. People who accept the reality of death see Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. Don't wait till you are at the doorsteps of eternity before you realize what life is all about.

* * *

A friend finally let go of a sinful relationship. It was a very painful sacrifice, but she did it, with God's grace. Surprisingly, she is strong, and what preoccupies her thoughts now is not so much the man she loved, but the God who loves her and who is drawing her to Himself. She realized that she had forgotten her God. She is still in pain, but very much at peace, all because she finally learned to let go, and let God.

* * *

Inviting you to our 10th Annual Family Recollection to be held on Palm Sunday, April 9, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Mariano Theatre, which will be held with the help of the Mission Angels. This year's theme is "Letting go, letting God, and moving on." Start the Holy Week right. Bring the whole family. For inquiries call 725-0452 or 4147044. Admission is free. Some priests will be there to give you the opportunity for confession and reconciliation with God.

* * *

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* * *

Think about it: At the end of our lives, when we finally see God face to face, and He tenderly asks us, "My child, did you love me when you were still alive?" I hope you and I can answer, "Lord, you know me, and you know that I tried, I really tried to love you in my life."

* * *

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* * *

I am content with the Lord.
Lord, remove the blocks that prevent me from seeing you and from loving you in my life. Amen.

How things have changed

REVELLE

Ramon J. Farolan

NEXT TUESDAY, APRIL 4, MARKS THE GOLDEN anniversary of Phi Beta Delta, the first post-war sorority. Not all members of the oldest sister sororities have survived its activities commemorating this important milestone. From an original group numbering more than 80, only 11 of us were commissioned as second lieutenants in the Armed Forces of the Philippines. After 50 years, perhaps our greatest achievement can be measured in units of 120 children, 222 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

Starting the first round of the sorority from 1954 to 1956, we arrived under two Elizalde-gown dresses, Elpidio Quirino from Ilocos Sur and Ramon Magsaysay from Zambales. This may seem an exception, but one must also see pre-the-opportunity to see the movement in chief in person, to hear him speak to us or to shake his hand. Not once did we honor either of them with a parade and review. We lived in a world that was completely confined from politics and politicking. Facts was no television, no radio was allowed in our barracks, and no newspapers were easily available on a daily basis. Only the occasional visit of senior foreign dignitary lured the staff inside the Grandstand to witness the arrival of the latest head of state. Even then, the place was still known as Luahan. It was only after several years that the site was christened Rizal Park. Plaza, in honor of the youngest general in the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

As I mentioned in an earlier column, our commencement speaker at graduation—it was spoken known as Apo's Week—was the late, 3-official of the land, former Senator Jose Laurel Jr. President Ramon Magsaysay died in the infamous Cebu Pacific Douglas C-54 plane that burst with some other passengers, and so was Senator President Urdaneta. But I guess for us, a really distinct reason why we can proudly call ourselves the Class of 1954 was that we were urban creatures. There was very little media coverage of the event. I don't think our graduation even made the inside pages of the newspapers.

Today things are not quite the same as before. Since the martial law years, only ten commanders-in-chief in the history of the country have been graduating class. If our memories flow from the time of President Marcos, this means that for almost 20 years—from 1965 to 1985—the cadets had only one grave of honor for their inspection—Marcos, Ferdinand Edralin Marcos. Then came Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo continued the practice. But this year, Only did her predecessors see better: she transferred a cluster in honor of the graduating class of Fidel Valdez Ramos, the president-general in Baguio City.

At one time, I suggested that, perhaps, the academy should take the risk of inviting someone else to the commencement exercises. It could be the number of the tapping independent of the choice from among its alumni. I recall that US Sen. John McCain, a Vietnam war veteran with a distinguished record, was the commencement speaker at the old Army and Navy Stadium in Quezon City. In fact, I believe that one was belonged to the "opposition" party in those days.

But who is the future now in the military institution who would even dare take that opportunity? Who would be invited even to the commencement exercises? Who would be invited to our cadets, a probably would be looked upon as a sign of disloyalty to military tradition.

But I see no advantage in breaking this practice which is a danger of becoming a tradition. If we are to close our cadets that they run their loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief than to an individual, who has no way of making them aware of this distinction by allowing them to interact on such a significant occasion with other elements of our political life? Then, of course, there is no end to such issues—from both the opposition and the administration—generating great strength and moral character coupled with an open mind and an open heart.

This year, the graduating Class of 2005 was made up of 205 members. That is almost the size of the entire cadet corps during our time. Like the pioneers classes, the Rebel of PMA Class 2006 is looked for the thirty and, most likely, no members will receive their appointments as commissioned officers and Non-People's Army volunteer soldiers of repenting in their respective assignments.

The life of a platoon leader is not an easy one. In my case, I had the good fortune of having a grandad, old veteran for my platoon sergeant. He taught me things not found in the textbooks and enabling materials of the academy. I shall always be grateful for his wisdom and guidance.

At Fort Bonifacio Last Friday was the graduation of the new military plebes from the Philippine Air Force Flying School in Lipa City. Three-fourths of their wives were student officers from the 1980s while 15 years ago, some of them were the leading lights of an enclave of local commercial pilots in foreign lands, the government should pursue with greater resolve the expansion of the current training program with the Asian Institute of Management so to drown some resources for the purchase of relatively inexpensive light aircraft that can be used primarily for maintaining the flying proficiency of civilian pilots. Instead of using the popular pretended and that apparently will last into the light of the day-to-day time.

As Col. Benvenuto Patlingo, PAFA Class 1980, was quoted as saying in a recent TV program featuring the Sky Seven. Once again, in some areas as an extension, here is a golden opportunity for his organization. And he smiled! The Air Force is fortunate to have him in this important role.

Graduation, high heels and changing the world

REBEL WITHOUT A CLUE

Patricia Evangelista

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO GRADUATION DAYS since I was allowed nothing more my five nursery classroom. If I get my hands on that diploma, I swear, in all the colors in heaven that I will give up class food, read novels forever, attend no parading literature instead of my poor computer records, and spend at least one hour a day in healthy exercise. I'll give anything, my head, my hamstrings, my family head Alba, my habit of smoking. Princess

LIKE 16, I'M—all I want is that sheet of paper that says nothing for years, just a piece, hopefully in the form of a thesis in Spanish 11 and a copy thereof on my bookcase forever.

I've been anticipating one in front of my thesis adviser's door three office for the last couple of weeks. The prayer is so used to seeing me sprinkled on the floor that he's taken to sweeping around the mound of sinking me to shoot over. I'm guessing he's motivated the door behind invisible square area my best prospect to distract from the fear of the hallway. I'm glad at least of no service.

The other day, I was in my usual state where I saw John Lloyd Cruz racing down the hall. I've stopped since when he saw me, smiled that charming, slightly confused grin, then scrunched down to my level to ask me if he could keep me company. I, for my life, turned to my roommate and backed my hair behind my ear. Yes, baby darling, yes, a thousand times yes—and in his dominant form, I woke up to my adviser's raised eyebrows and low voice ringing in my head.

"Pumikit, sabay-sabay ang dalawa mo?"

"Sinigurip, ma'am."

"Dad pong gan'ng-ding kau nigbo?"

"Yes ma'am," I said.

She opened the door to her office. "Good."

I've been living an orange-tinted hazy. Three weeks, count 'em—supposedly weeks of supposedly. Hugely drama a couple of glasses, six dozen in front of my laptop, and super sassy like a maniac. I get from a thing rag to a freezing, giggling pansies mid-interest in the space of two minutes. Half the time, I feel like I should be typing, jogging and singing "The Hills are Alive" all at once.

When I was younger, I longed to swing on that it would be here if I put off sleeping for a week or so. I thought the next Kidlat, the wasn't. At the two my classic is going, I'm beginning to wish I'd stopped sleeping two months ago. My theories span entire interval of quantization, but no other reason than class I know about Einstein's theory of relativity. The prospect of running a statistical analysis is more frightening for me than arguing spread-eagled while wearing a tuxedo in front of a crowded cafeteria. Oh wait, been there, done that.

I've been begging interviews from people I've never seen, talking to friends from everywhere I've met or read have possibly some in the next week, and I've invented a public where the thoughts of eight hours' sleep is as ridiculous as getting my dog to notice his name isn't "Sit." As I type now, my eyes are swimming, the screen is going fuzzy and my stomach, clothing, woven hair is complaining so much like a broken-stuffed shred. I'm one of those people who can't sleep when they're tired. If I'm very annoyed, I open 20 minutes looking for my cell phone, possibly until I realized I could call it to make it ring, and when I found it, I spent the next 20 staring into space, trying to figure out how to make my mother ring. Enjoy Coney, who others out about to catch nap, but takes to taking my every morning if she wakes me up before I'm ready. Which is, like, never.

I had my fortune the other day and had less than 15 minutes to get dressed, get to school and get ready to be interviewed. By then I was, crawling across the floor of my bedroom, trying to find my black heels and coming up with one of my shoes. I had two different pairs. My adviser's eyes watching the day before my defense was "please dress decently." I found my new jacket covered with white fur hair, jumped into the jeep, jumped off, jumped on again to fetch the jacket I'd left on the floor, and found myself in the middle of the road when the dumb heels open and water and red pooling about. And then we were late.

I'm beginning to wonder what all this is going to amount to. For just this, the whole 17 years of classrooms and textbooks and unreasoning names of dead men. I mean sure, when like every other girl below the age of 21—means of, after I graduate, I'll be able to get a job. Or maybe not. My major is not a feminist, and hopefully they have pairs of eleven heels a week. I know a couple of guys who will agree with that statement). But they say it's the idealism who suffer most, because the real world doesn't want salesmen. I'm in the grand old age of 20—nothing is impossible, no anything.

I'm off to finish more again—incremental revisions before the powers-that-be sign those empty leases in the acceptance hall. When all this is over, I'm going to see my uncle to check for I can, every morning and happily deep through it. But whether I march down the university mall on the rear or the side cyclone in the last year, I'd like to send him a postcard, a graduatory shame in all the new graduates of 2006. May the force be with you, and may the world think with your coming.

E-mail the author at pia.evangelista@gmail.com

Women with curves

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SET TO COMMENCE ON 3 MAY THIS TUESDAY (April 4) at 10 p.m. is the BBD Original Movie "Betty Vicious Diaries."

It stars Jessica Brosas as Ana, a young Mexican-American woman. (This movie gave Brosas her first screen role, although she made already be a singer and host by profession.) Ana's best bud Betty, "The Sweetheart of the Throwing Bats."

Lupe Quinones, Ana's mother Carmen, is another familiar figure. She stars in "Real Women" and other films by Gregory Nava, who directed the award-winning movie in one of Salvador Dina Lange Bacon "Desperate Housewives."

"Real Women Have Curves" is based on the play by Josefina Lopez and is directed by Patricia Cardoso, whom I first showed at the San Jacinto Film Festival in 2002, the movie was both the Audience and Special Jury Awards for the festival and festival.

Young Mexican women might find many things in common with him who, as the movie opens, has just graduated from high school and is struggling to come to terms with herself, her heritage, her sexuality and her body. The fact is especially difficult to achieve given that her mother is constantly on her case to lose weight and dress better. It only to heartbreakingly familiar when we all see in the road to be "normal" and to fit with social mores.

But Ana has other plans for herself. Her teachers and champion, portrayed by George Lopez, believes enough in her to work to get her a scholarship to an elite university in California. Ana's own lack of confidence and her parents' opposition. She knows chafing the less than she her mother and older sister looks to gauge what is going to happen next. She has a secret dream: she wants to carry on to be a cheerleader in her life, on a hot sultry summer night!

ONE of the things she can do is to finally declare independence from her mother's interference.

Switching to the other interiors of her studio, he's previously sleep—there is no line but it cannot be turned on so it would take days—Ana begins to strip to her underwear, much to the chagrin of Carmen who feels embarrassed and valuable lessons from her co-workers, her sister and her brother. Lessons in hard work and pursuing the limits of human endurance in order to achieve more by a group effort. Lessons on speaking out and speaking up.

But most of all, Ana realizes that it is only by being true to her own self that she can find her own abilities and gifts, and by loving her own body can she find her own soul and discover her real destiny.

THERE are no real-size to this simple coming-of-age story. There is no one single break-through moment where Ana transforms from an awkward girl full of confusion and doubts, to a young adult burning her future.

Instead, what we have are many moments of triumph, as in that "no-lapsing" scene in the factory, or when Ana decided that her boyfriend deserves more than her silence, or when she finally forcing him to look at her body, after which he becomes "more beautiful."

"Real Women Have Curves" takes as set a positive view with Ana, and the journey to self-it is not straightforward, but rather meandering and full of detours. But the story does get to its destination, and we are all the richer for sharing the trip.

Another thing I like about the movie is its setting in the Mexican-American culture, chockfull of telling details—from the wall murals that decorate the factory where Ana's mother works to the dresses in the quinceañera, to the food that is devoured in the movie, and in their brilliant costumes, to Ana's "private" singing for her on the occasion of her graduation, and even the scenes of her mother's family in the Mexican border town. Ana's mother's family in the Mexican border town. Ana's mother's family in the Mexican border town.

Carmen, the mother is undoubtedly the movie's strongest character. Instead of being merely overbearing, if not heartless, Carmen is revealed to be by her own mother in her character—abandoned, short-sighted, demanding, gentle and comforting, and a first-class exploiter of third gods, a style that is the envy of the Tita's other. I enjoy the movie, the filmmaker Maria, I'm grateful for the time I spent with Ana and the other cast women with curves. After all, I'm also one of them!

Doing it right

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy Davila

ONE CAN BE CERTAIN THAT ALMOST EVERY Filipino today desires change in the way the issues at risk. What form that change should take is, however, the least of most people's concerns. The latter that if only we can have fewer leaders, there may be no need to change the system. Others think the quality of our leaders is itself a result of the defective system we have.

I thought that if Filipinos were asked today to choose between changing the Constitution and changing Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the great majority would look to Arroyo and keep the Constitution. That does not mean that the people are satisfied with the performance of President Arroyo. It may only think that an entirely new constitution is the core of all for the nation's problems. But certainly, the observation of the rewriting of the Constitution know that a basic requirement for doing it right is the presence of a critical mass of leaders with objectives of partisan politics. Right now, it is such objectives that are driving the "Charter Express."

It is obvious what those are. The first is to abolish the Senate, the only branch of government that has been able to provide some measure of check against Mr. Arroyo's self-preservation and indulgence. Since it is the Senate that will successfully remember itself as an impeachment court the moment an impeachable complaint obtains a one-fifth vote in the House of Representatives. The second is to lay to rest, once and for all, the legitimacy questions that have hounded Mr. Arroyo's presidency since 2001, and all the criminal charges arising from the fraudulent conduct of the 2004 elections.

Clearly, Charter change, by hook or by crook, is the weapon's last card in her bid to survive all 2006 and avoid prosecution and imprisonment at the end of her term. This is the international issue that she can use to divert the attention of people to her side. Given the weakness of her hand, this bid is truly astounding in its treasonous, it concedes nothing, not even a shortening of her term as President. She is risen on making sure that the constitutional reform process is controlled by her political operatives to prevent anything from upsetting the poverty, the indifference and ignorance of the masses.

By its construction, a nation declares itself as a legal and political community. It is the way it expresses our self-understanding—who we are, and how we have been shaped by our customs and beliefs, and by our pasts. It structures the nation in the modern world, and embodies its understanding of how it can secure its future and develop and constrain the nation's life. And finally, the constitution lays down the system of power structured appropriate to the nation's goals, the institutional arrangements by which the state governs, and a statement of the principles of rights.

Rewriting a constitution need not be strict-and-mere affair. There's a way of doing it that maximizes the profile of blind experimentation or utopian thinking, and points the way to a living and working Charter that might have a thing or two from how Denmark's experience.

Although it has operated for the most part without a written constitution, New Zealand has, since 2000, initiated work on basic constitutional reform. In a speech in April 2001, the then minister of Justice Stephen Kidd, both in the Victoria University of Wellington, convened a pitch-breaking conference on "Building the Constitution." The conference aimed to take stock of what the country has done over the years in its process efforts to craft a living constitution.

The organizers commissioned brief papers from more than four papers covering a wide range of topics. A quick glance at the themes taken up gives us an idea of the concepts and issues that guided the conference.

There were 10 sessions. (1) "What constitutional values underpin and guide the cultural and historical realities that have shaped the national consciousness? (2) "The constraints of treaties and international law" dealt with aspects of international law, and the constraints posed by a globalized economy. (3) "What constitutional values should be tackled as the political origins and legal framework of the existing constitution; (4) "The means of changing and re-constructing" dealt with the kinds of the nation's sovereignty and Maori rights; (5) "Who should be head of state" examined the political and issues of cultural diversity and national integration; (6) "Who should be head of state" examined the implications of declaring a republic or staying with the Crown; (7) "The Executive, public service and the constitution" examined the relationship between the Cabinet and the Parliament, the civil service, and the role of local governments and community organizations; (8) "Should parliament be changed" examined the various options for reforming parliament; (9) "What role for the judges" reviewed the proper scope of judicial authority; and (10) "A written constitution?" discussed the pros and cons of shifting from the unwritten tradition to a written constitution.

I do not mean for this list to serve as a model for the Philippines, for reasons it reflects the specific priorities and concerns of today's New Zealanders. We should have our own list reflecting the problems and issues we have encountered in the course of our nation's life.

But one such an imaginary list also be side the stupid constitute questions that arrive on the basis for the signature campaign of the so-called "people's initiative," and get us down to the issues things which the Arroyo regime regards one people.

Comments to padlo_lives@pdnet.com

THEY SAID

Useless formula

"The amount of fuel police guidance will remove the environment among military personnel, especially when the current figure in the Cielito Gen'l rape is now the prospective replacement of General Sergio (AFP chief of staff) while the others were rewarded with the executive positions."

— Ano Bagong Bayan on images for wasting fighting efficiency

Opportunities

"After all available opportunities and, if not, make those opportunities available."

— The Philippine Military Academy graduate Ord Lt. Ariel Rebadulla upon speech during the PMA's graduation rites

Emotional being

"Being gay is not a matter of mind; it's your emotional being. I've never had a boyfriend but it doesn't mean that I'm not gay. I don't have to be a screaming faggot to be gay. This is me, and I'm gay!"

— Jose Ramos Padilla

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to jsarmiento@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Jean V. Sarmiento Jr.

One nation, three worlds

THE THREE WORLDS OR ECONOMIC SYSTEMS IN THE PHILIPPINES THAT DEvelopment economist Nimfa Rosas is referring to are the metropolitan centers, agrarian societies and indigenous communities.

Under the present setup, growth is defined as the expansion of the metropolitan economy as a result of the transfer of assets and control of resources from the rural communities, according to Rosas.

He says the focus continues to be on the gross domestic product, which does not reflect the real incomes of most Filipinos.

The economic claims that the development strategy—liberalization of trade, opening up of the country to foreign investors, privatization of public corporations and emphasis on export-oriented industries—that the government has pursued since the '80s has resulted in environmental degradation and more people living in poverty.

Rosas proposes a development strategy that seeks to empower the people outside the metropolitan centers.

He is pushing for sustainable countryside development in which an increase in the net income and net worth of communities is considered the more appropriate indicator of development.

By Sixto K. Roxas

THE LOTTE AND "HONOWHO" transfer highlight is anymore that paves the two potential problems of the country: poverty and environmental destruction.

To understand the depths of our problems, we must see the Filipino nation as composed of three worlds—three economic and social systems.

Eighty-five million people in some 17 million households live in habitats that range from mountain-hugging villages, lowland river valleys, and coastal plains to rolling lands and steep mountain ranges, and to sprawling metropolitan centers.

Some 30 percent of these households are in the metropolitan centers that are now massively linked with the world trading system than with the rest of the countryside hinterland.

There are vast imports-dependent metropolises of Metro Manila, Cebu, Cebu and Davao, smaller mills and food processing plants, industries in the export-processing zones, logging and mining companies, plantations and investor-owned utilities that provide power, communications, securities, banking and other financial and social services to these metropolises and their stakeholders.

Most of the people, perhaps two-thirds, live in the countrysiding agricultural economy—fishermen, rice, corn and coconut farmers, small traders, artisans and service people, landowners and proprietors in the town cities.

A small minority are the indigenous people in small, largely self-sufficient, subsistence communities in remote islands and highlands of the country.

Combined, these agrarian and tribal areas domain economic output (11 or 12 million families living) is some 150 metropolitan municipalities.

Micro-commands attention

Seventy percent of Filipinos are in these tribal and agrarian worlds. 30 percent, in the metropolitan enclaves. Tragically it is the metropolitan sector that commands the primary attention and it is on these values to represent the totality of the Filipino nation.

National policy has paid less attention to helping the 70 percent of the Filipino people acquire the technology, organization, and human and capital resources to make use of their resources in order to raise those values to higher levels of economic efficiency and improve their living standards.

Instead, government has meant having the national economy serve appropriate and acquire control of the land, forests, minerals, marine and fresh waters transferred the new commanders to serve the needs of established foreign and metropolitan elites that controlled it and powerful minority.

In fact, the growth strategy of the government and the acquisitive instincts of the metropolitan elite, particularly its private assets and control of resources away from the rural sector. The expansion of these resources of wealth and power used commissions has become the very definition of growth and progress.

Unsustainable

Realistically, a growth strategy that does not give the highest priority to the revival of the community stakeholders cannot be sustainable, economically, ecologically, socially or politically.

The most central structure of Filipinos as they has produced into the decade for any of the country as an independent republic. The structure has remained as a result of a wide spectrum of economic policies, strategies and political systems.

The Constitutional Commission that was drafted, after Marcos' fall because the Constitution of 1987 embodied in principles and institutions what the people won the period of 14 through the 14 years of the Marcos dictatorship: inalienable democratic freedoms and an equitable and sustained development.

Unfortunately, the country's elite and its leadership have since abdicated their responsibility to fighting the continued existence of the Filipino oligarchy's hereditary power—politics.

Oligarchy

Government policy since 1987 has reclaimed the constitutional mandate that development should establish a "self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos."

What had been into the social arena as the glorious "People's Revolution" turned into a mere concession of the pre-Marcos political and economic oligarchy—a task we need to thank four glorious days of February 1986.

Ironically, the 20th anniversary of the restoration of democracy coincides with the presidential of Proclamation 1017, the cancellation of all permits to withdraw the state, and the forcible dispersal, with clubs and water cannons of all crowds seeking to celebrate the anniversary.

In returning Proclamation 1017, the administration had called the people to accept a semblance of its tyranny in order to give it enough power to destroy the person and must avoid "forces." Rather than pursuing that objective under the principles and along the path laid out in the 1987 Constitution, the administration chose to pursue with greater vigor the path prescribed by the World Trade Organization and the "Washington Consensus" that past leaders had followed.

The development strategy pursued by every Philippine president from the Macapagal-Garcia (1961-1965) to the Macapagal-Arroyo (2001-2006) has followed the conventional wisdom espoused by the Bretton Woods institutions, the industrial countries, the international banks and transnational corporations. Mandatory liberalization of international trade, opening up of countries to foreign investors, privatization of public corporations, deregulation of public utilities, emphasis on export-oriented industries, priority of public sector investments in infrastructure, primarily to facilitate foreign trade and investment policies that favor Filipino and foreign investors in ownership of land and resources.

Boom and bust

Over that span of more than decades, the country's economic performance has been erratic, going through about 16 cycles of boom and bust. Even by the indicators used in that school of economic theory and policy, the average long-term growth rate in real GDP from 1960-to-2005 was a miserable 3.8 percent per annum.

The value of the peso went down from $1 to P3 (2.50 in 1960) to P3.97 (2.50 in 1962) to more than 2 P55 euros. The foreign debt of the country grew more than 55 times.

Macapagal-Arroyo, with its dominance in economics, reversed the inward-looking policy of his predecessors from Roxas to Garcia by removing import and exchange controls and making the free market in foreign exchange in 1986.

The Macapagal-Gil, with her dominance in economics and her team of neoliberals, proceeded to move aggressively with export-driven and determination to catch up with our neighbors along the same path.

Starvation despite growth

Thus, the focus continues to be on gross domestic product (GDP), an indicator that does not reflect the real incomes received by the majority of the nation's families.

GDP fails to register the growing numbers of people not clothing and the net worth or wealth of the nation's families is rapidly dwindling through cultivation of natural resources and transfer of control of the metropolitan elites and foreign investors.

The government relies on export dollar wins to combat poverty. The more than 7 million Filipinos of 1994 show exactly one thing: a measure of economic size of every gain or loss received by the nation's families. It is no wonder that even doctors are downgrading themselves to be able to send remittances home.

The more export-income are not invested to going into the medium and small scale ventures that contribute most to the earnings of the households in the medium- and small-scale enterprises in the country, our expansion, that foreign investors will enforce our people's poverty powers to be put numbers aside.

The last time made about Filipinos dressing themselves in the line by clinging to unfeasible policies that encourage our own people to undermine the primary role for economic development. Will we not put study do that by changing our 1987 Constitution to suit foreign investors whose experience in Bolivia, and tens of countries, will only reinforce industries that will eliminate the limits between the wealthy few and the impoverished many?

Profit from resources

Regardless of pretending popularity in legitimacy, our country's leadership has resisted by used a weapon that, instead of curbing the problem, has exacerbated it.

This is the mining industry. Government has by private business expenditure on foreign investments to profit from our resources. The mantra is that what is good for business is good for the people as well. But if business sales are booming, exports are soaring, energy-use profits are big, all is not what is not avoid.

It is pointless, opening up our markets and giving foreign investors free reign over our resources have not reduced and will not solve poverty or environmental destruction. Our tax structure is regressive, tax relief is that in the end, we can not survive our costly pursue a sustainable development strategy that makes our people the principal beneficiaries.

In the meanwhile, poverty has persisted and remained. Filipinos nationally were into Manila and Cebu and Davao—the cities most prosperous by the business sectors of the '50s.

People were not considered the beneficiaries of the economy. They were the "problem."

Interestingly, the growth in their numbers was considered the main problem of the country. Therefore, the ultimate solution was to control their rapid multiplication.

Development economists, however, have come to accept the subordination of large-scale, often foreign-controlled, metropolitan economies as the basic sort of export-driven economy.

Decentralize

Our age has the advantage of technology development, making possible the decentralization of the economy to exploit the advantages of scale in environmentally less destructive and environmentally-sensitive ways.

It is now possible for communities—the rural areas—to be the primary units of organization, management, planning and resource administration, and even accounting. They can become the units which through cooperatives, business associations among their native democracy a day-to-day process of "administration by the administered" rather than a periodic exercise of a people's participation in only the leaders who will be their masters.

The country does not lack professionally trained economists and other social science experts who can provide the necessary expertise. But the repeated failure of Filipinos and policymakers alike to demonstrate the intelligence of the economic, social sciences and managerial paradigms either to explain the condition or to provide the workable strategy and protocol of action.

Viable alternative

All the issues we seek but our viable alternative—political, economic, sustainable development, a framework that gives a more appropriate and meaningful indicator of development and relieve the human lost in the economic and the narrow and an needs of communities. The community-oriented economic-based alternative demands the fundamental rethinking of development measures, institutions, practitioners, and institutions to match the realities of the Philippine condition with the opportunities and threats of globalization.

The implementation of this will put a stop to environmental destruction and address poverty directly.

The key to making communities is their economic—political—ecological sustainable development. Feeding, clothing, housing, health care, education and the infrastructure of the local communities must be the primary objective of the local economy.

It establishes in a different community-centered accounting system a philosophy of management that locates the income and net worth of local communities in an asset that they can control. The government governs the economy and the government governs the use of data use and endowment. Sustainable communities build a community economy.

It recognizes that we must invest our natural resources wisely and productive in our distresses and their children. This we cannot do if: (1) we exhaust them as we can't replace them, or (2) we refuse to discriminate to pay off our foreign debts.

Accounting system

It considers that the communities in the community's welfare by making development with an accounting system that knows the integrity of the resources and the power, values and enhancement of the community's net worth, environment of its people.

The government audits much of the imposed exchange rate between the pesos and the US dollar. The peso remains strong in the face of the dollar, but the country's economy is weakened by the imposition of a system of used industrial progressive would view this as a symptom of a pathological economic imbalance.

It is such of labors under than of health.

The new accounting system would that understands the dynamic interaction between the metropolitan and the agrarian worlds like making the Philippines boom.

The new accounting system would operate outsource by the metropolitan economy determines the capacity of the rural economy to sustain the 70 percent of the population that now live there. It would ensure the existence of the young population of the world are forced to migrate to the metropolitan centers. But the outward orientation of these centers fails to provide employment for the migrants, even to support those migrants. They are compelled to seek jobs in those countries where the demand for high-tech persons has made the cities centers of the transnational corporations—the "managing" and "coordinating" jobs.

Paradox

The combined trends produce a paradox for the poor in many because the local economy is weak and weakening.

The metropolitan economy has become merely a subordinate link in the globalized economy. Its dynamism is dependent on foreign investments, on the ever-increasing investments and more dominant. The larger agrarian sector has little purchasing power from purely local consumption and is forced to look abroad to work. The growth of overseas Filipino workers has made the remittances of their earnings a more important source of foreign exchange than exports of goods.

The demand for foreign exchange is largely for basic medium product-using raw supply, and the heavy consumption of the elite. That has grown more slowly than the GDP and the value of exports. Even with overseas workers' remittances (which, the strength in the peso-dollar exchange rate. The week to our economy has resulted less strong peso.

The foreign exchange crisis should close credit for both cause and effect.

It is common—in policy and strategy, we can expect no resolution of events like the Lotte transfer, the Honowho issue, and the "Wowowee" tragedy in the future.

In the 1987 Constitution we already have the mandate for an opposite direction. Instead, we must ask ourselves: Is our government to exercise local autonomy with the goal of making local communities economically self-reliant.

Let us ask ourselves: Is the Constitution of 1987 and future to by observance rather than by its systematic violations and the eventual junking of its basic principles and institutions in order to make the "people-empowered" thrive because after they laid top-ple of the Marcos dictatorship.

This paper was excerpted from a speech delivered at the Democracy Convention Hotel & Resort in Antipolo City on February 11.

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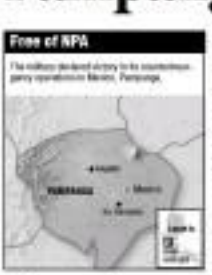
Across the NATION

Text to your feedback inquirer on cam/sign/sky/message to 2327 (Globe) or 282 (Smart) Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Pampanga town declared free of NPA



By Tonette Orejas
(With Gaynor Lizares-Dusk)

MEXICO, PAMPANGA—AN ARMY COMMANDER ON SATURDAY declared this town, considered as one of the strongholds of the communist movement, as free from the influence of the New People's Army.

To celebrate that status, the military and barangay leaders organized an "antiterrorism rally" for surrendering activists of the "former NPA supporters," medical missions for residents and an "anticommunist rally" a few days after the 39th anniversary.

Lt. Col. Ricardo Visaya, commander of the 69th Infantry Battalion, said these events marked the culmination of the campaign that began in November 2005 or two months after Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan assumed leadership of the Army's 7th Infantry Division in Central Luzon.

Still the villagers have been cleared of rebels, "Visaya said before reclassifying.

The 39th, he said, held sway in at least 28 of the town's 43 villages before the campaign started. In about the same time, the battalion constituted its headquarters from Sheridan, Turlac, to Mexico.

Instead of maintaining platoons, the military deployed small-scale special operations teams complemented by paramilitary forces recruited from the villages.

Sought for reactions, the NPA command in Pampanga answered at the military's action.

"But still it would "continue serving the interests of the impoverished masses by being their genuine army and by fighting the fascist military that protects the interests of the landed elite and capitalists."

Visaya said military officers-in-charge of dismantling supposed rebel units had forced rebels to move to western Pampanga, at the boundary of Tarlac, Bulacan and Bataan.

Three rebel returnees spoke to the workshop for their messages centered on a single message: Withdraw support for the NPA to "end the violence" and "restore peace and democracy" in the town.

One of them, who preferred to be called Mylene, related how his husband, also a rebel returnee, was killed by rebels in 2002 for "no good reason."

"I witnessed how unjust the NPA was," she said.

Benjamin Santos, village chief of San Jose Malino, said the military did not force him and other local officials to organize the assembly.

"He were power to reign [here]," Insolera said.

Visaya also said the military was remaining in efforts in Mexico through the government's "Kalayaan sa Barangay" program in which President Macapagal-Arroyo allotted P5 million to every village freed from the control of the rebels.

He said P4.5 million would be allotted for infrastructure projects and the remaining P500,000 for livelihood projects. These would be supervised by the military.

Albay villagers feast on meat of dead dolphin

LEGASPI CITY—VILLAGERS IN Barangay Tinopan, Rapu-Rapu, Albay feasted on the meat of a 75-kilogram dolphin which died after it was entrapped on Friday morning in a fishnet of Juan Dimasin Arinio, a resident of Barangay Binanuan, same town.

Binanuan village chief Reynold Asuncion confirmed the report in a cell phone interview.

Asuncion said they buried what was left of the sea mammal and took a sample for examination by government authorities.

He said nothing happened to those who had eaten the meat of the dolphin.

Earlier on Feb. 9, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) issued its fifth study showing that fish from the Sorsogon coastal area, including Rapu-Rapu Island is safe to eat, contrary to claims.

Officials of the Lafayette Philippines Inc., whose mining operations in Rapu-Rapu town had been alleged to have contaminated the waters of the island municipality and some parts of Sorsogon, said BFAR's continuing tests consistently showed that there was no mercury contamination as claimed by its critics.

Those groups' claims had soured off people from buying fish, destroying the livelihood of thousands of Sorsogon fishermen in the process. Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

A DOLPHIN swimming in the waters of Bohol. Residents of a village in Albay had feasted on the meat of a dead dolphin after it was caught in a fishnet. A missing fire saucer was proof that there was no contamination in waters off its operation site. INQUIRER

Time for Cha-cha sign bid tagged too short

CLEMENTE CITY—THE TIME spent for the barangay assemblies in connection with the signatures drive on the proposed Charter change is too short for people wanting to learn more about the process, a city councilor here said.

Wilfredo Ramos, also former director of the Commission on Elections in Central Mindanao, said the limited time deprived the people of information on the long-term effects of amending the Constitution.

Ramos also said those behind the so-called "people's initiative" appear to be too eager to tell the people what the move was all about.

He cited the failure of pro-Charter-change officials to formally inform the city council of the conduct of the barangay assemblies.

"There was no correct information about it (Cha-cha petition), and if they failed as to form local institutions like the city council, an official, a lawyer like me, how else could the ordinary citizens have been informed?" Ramos asked.

Khalid Alimudin, a former student leader in one of the colleges here, said the government could use other media, like the Internet, to make copies of the petition widely available.

"Apparently, no extra copies were made available of the petition, which was supposed to include proposed revisions in the Constitution," Alimudin said.

He said voters needed more time to go over the draft people's petition, which was simultaneously presented nationwide during the March 25 barangay assembly so they can generate better informed discussions on Cha-cha. Ainah R. Macalinao and Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Agri execs say bugs threaten 60-80 percent of Panay farms

By Hazel P. Villa
PDI Visayas Bureau

THIS species of black bug devastates rice supply on Panay Island.

ILOILO CITY—Unless the autumnal rice black bug (LBB) that ran the gamut of rice farms are soon controlled, about 60 to 80 percent of Panay Island's rice harvest would be infected, the Provincial Agricultural Office (PAO) of Iloilo.

Provincial Agriculturist Julito Delabre said the BBB (Scotinophara coarctata, S. luzonica) also threatens in Negros Occidental, Antique and Capiz.

Delabre said the BBB is one of the most difficult pests to manage and a mere 10 BBB bugs per hill can result in a yield loss of 15 to 25 percent.

The Philippine Information Agency here also reported that Capiz province is also "readying contingency measures against any possible invasion of the BBB."

Capiz provincial agriculturist Sylvia Ao la Cruz said Gov. Vicente Bermejo has alerted municipal agricultural officials about the threat and to report the presence of BBB in their areas.

The rice pest was first spotted in the first week of March in the barangays of Pinamuntan Hilaida and Pinamuntan Old in Ajuy, Iloilo when agriculturists from the Department of Agriculture were inspecting hybrid rice and a farmer asked them about the presence of black bugs in his rice farm.

PAO records showed that more than 1,000 hectares of rice farms in Ajuy and the neighboring towns of Concepcion, Sara, and San Dionisio in northern Iloilo have been infested by the BBB, locally known as "kabaka."

"The damage in Concepcion is minimal because the rice fields planted for the third cropping is less than five hectares," said Concepcion Mayor Raul Gustilo in a text message.

Also called Malaysian rice black bug and Japanese rice black bug, the BBB earlo rice plant sap and probe in infest the leaves of the rice stems, causing the plant to wither. Heavy infestation causes growth, formation of white heads, half-filled or empty grains and browning of leaves or bug burn.

Delabre said he has recalled municipal agriculturists from their regular assignments to help in the infested towns.

Both Pulido Ito and De la Cruz said another set of fumigating BBB is to use high in nearby light traps since the bugs are attracted to bright lights and can therefore be easily collected and destroyed.

Delabre said light trapping is most effective during the full moon on April 13 or even three days before and after that date.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) said its research shows that a few days before and after a full moon, a farmer is sure to catch more BBB in the field than any other day and if boats or Palong vessels, which carry bright lights, travel on a full moon night, the BBB can be attracted to these lights and be carried from one place to another.

PhilRice said the first BBB infestation in the country was observed in Palawan where it spanned an outbreak in 1982, damaging some 4,500 hectares of rice lands. After a decade, the BBB invaded several areas in Mindanao including Zamboanga City, Cotabato and Davao Oriental, in 1996, it was spotted in Negros Occidental and Siquijor.

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Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals' "P1 Million Makeover Shopping Spree" promo launch took Glorietta Activity Center by storm—with no less than R&B prince Jay-R and teen actress Shaina Magdayao giving extremely cool and refreshing performances.

The one-of-a-kind promo gives P100,000 each in Ayala Malls Electronic Gift Certificates or Ayala Malls eGCs to 10 lucky winners who will spend it all in an afternoon shopping spree. The P100,000 Ayala Malls eGC prize can be used in eGC-affiliated establishments within Ayala Malls.

It's so easy to join—shoppers need only to write their name, address, contact number and signature on a carton of Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals' two variants—Spicy Fresh and Peppermint Ice. They can also enclose three Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals sachets in an envelope and drop their entries in drop boxes at all LBC branches nationwide.

Introduced last September 2005, Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals is the only toothpaste with the breakthrough breath strips called Cooling Crystals. When brushing, these Cooling Crystals instantly dissolve in the mouth, which is specially formulated and patented to give a burst of breath freshening power.

There will be two winners each from Metro Manila, North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The provincial winners will be flown in or driven to Metro Manila, with free hotel accommodations and travel expenses courtesy of Colgate-Palmolive. Jay-R and Shaina will then join the 10 winners for an afternoon of shopping at Glorietta on May 13, 2006.

Consumers can still join as the deadline for the submission of entries is extended to April 17, 2006.

Watch out for the draw date on April 21, 2006 as 10 winners will get a once-in-a-lifetime chance to shop with the stars.

Jay-R sings the Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals jingle while Shaina dances to the upbeat tune.

Jay-R, Marvin, Shaina and Dyan Castillo warmly greet the crowd during the grand kickoff launch at the Glorietta Activity Center.

Randy Cuevas and Mitch & Manny rock the house down, to the delight of the crowd.

Colgate owner product manager Kinky Espinosa and associate product manager Ed Abarta draw 12 lucky winners from the audience, giving away P1,000 each worth of Ayala Malls eGCs. The special draw provided a sample of the promo to the crowd.

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Editor Jun Bandigued
Bureau Chief Nico A. Rivanda

Business picks up in new fish port

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Data Montawal, Maguindanao

HER APPEARANCE IS A FAR cry from the popular view of a fish vendor. She does not smell of fish but of sweet perfume that is popular among younger women.

But her composed but alert expression suggests that she is all business.

Nida Taro, 32, has become one of the most well-known fish suppliers in Tenggol, a small barangay in the newly created municipality of Datu Montawal in Maguindanao. The place has become a popular source of freshwater fish among traders from the nearby cities of Kidapawan, Tacurong and Midsayap.

On the concrete boat landing, amid the chaos of porters carrying fish boxes, buyers checking fish grades, and suppliers haggling over prices, Taro is silently counting and recounting her supply.

"If you miss the count of a single tabay [fish box] in a load, you may lose a day's net profit. You have to be very careful, since some of the price is determined by the size of the fish," she said.

At the Tenggol port, a P13-million structure constructed by the EU Agency for International Development's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program, Taro is one of the most sought-after fish suppliers. Her fresh stocks come all the way from the Lipuzan Marsh, one of Asia's largest wetlands and rich source of a variety of freshwater fish species.

"I have to serve hard since I'm currently feeding more than a dozen people," said Taro, who lost her husband after a long struggle with hypertension.

Taro does not have children, but she has 10 siblings and their children who depend on her for their daily needs. Hers is a story common among some single women who, because of their superior business and trading skills, have assumed responsibility in supporting their elderly kin's families.

"When my husband died, I decided to keep myself busy in him about any activity to overcome my depression. It was at that time I decided to take over my husband's business in fish trading," she said.

Growing business

She did not simply take over her husband's business. With an investment of P1,800, she bought more fishnets, set larger fish traps, and hired more people to expand the enterprise.

Within three months, Taro began earning a daily gross income of almost P1,500, almost triple her late husband's average.

She now has to fulfill more than a dozen orders of fish, with live catfish being the most popular.

"I cannot attribute all of my increased earnings to my decision to expand the business. A major factor is also the influx of buyers getting more interested in Tenggol after the completion of this boat landing," said Taro, speaking of the facility that was constructed about two years ago.

The facility owes its existence to one enthusiast. After the landing area was completed, the number of boats docking in Tenggol has increased by almost 30 percent. Likewise, the volume of fish landed at the facility rose by almost 50 percent, attracting more buyers and traders from nearby cities and municipalities.

Jamalia Singgon, a fish buyer from Carmen town in North Cotabato, confirms this. During her almost 10 years in the business, she has moved from one town to another to look for consistent supply of freshwater fish.

First buyer

"When this boat landing was completed, I was one of the first buyers to use this facility and there were only a few of us here. Today, around 20 buyers visit the place and compete for the best catch," she said.

A day in Tenggol usually is long day for Taro, whose routine starts with supervising the segregation of the day's catch by variety, packing the fish in wooden boxes, and bringing them to the port in-to-outrigger boat.

"The boat ride from the Lipuzan Marsh takes about two hours, so my boat to start paddling before the break of dawn," she said. Her day usually ends at about 5 p.m., when the last batch of buyers arrives.

"You can just imagine the kind of rush hour we had to endure before the construction of the boat landing," Taro said.

Before, the place was just a clearing where boats docked along the muddy riverbank. Fish suppliers and buyers transacted business under the scorching heat of the sun, hauling their wares through the mud. If it rained, buyers and sellers alike got soaked.

High-impact project

"Look at me now! I can already afford to put a little makeup on my face and sit comfortably under a shed while waiting for the buyers. I don't have to smell of sun-dried fish," she said.

Doing business while being protected from the sun and the rain are just some of the benefits people attribute to the facility.

"The boat landing is among our high-impact projects designed to boost rural productivity, lower transport costs, and connect once insecure, far-flung communities to market centers," explained Rosalde Ryll, GEM regional manager.

The infrastructure, he said, did not only benefit the more than 4,000 residents of Datu Montawal, but also allowed the municipal government to generate revenue from the increased volume of transport and trade.

It has also became the barangay's convergence point for goods and passengers arriving from nearby cities and clusters of fishing communities.

While Taro tries to meet the buyers' demands for better quality of fish, she is also setting her sights on the possibility of reducing the costs she pays for her products. Faced with increasing transport costs, she plans to establish on a new enterprise.

"I will build my own boat. Not big, but just enough for my needs," she declared.

SINGGON, a fish buyer from Carmen municipality in North Cotabato, checks the quality of fish arriving at the Tenggol Boat Landing, in Datu Montawal, Maguindanao. PHOTO BY JUNE

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LAZY DAY
A worker takes a rest on top of transparent plastic sacks of potatoes at the Trinidad Vegetable Trading Post in Trinidad, Benguet, from where most of Metro Manila's vegetables come.

Noli tells ejected NorthRail families: Give gov't more time

CITY OF MALOLOS—VICE PRESIDENT Noli de Castro on Thursday asked residents, who were relocated to give way to the NorthRail project here, to give the government more time to address their needs.

De Castro, the concurrent chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), met with former residents of Barangay Bunglad who complained that the government's promises of electricity, potable water, transportation facility and other basic services in their relocation area in Norzagaray Bulacan were not delivered.

De Castro assured residents in the 15-hectare Northville 6 that he would ask the National Housing Authority (NHA), city officials and the developer, Bukidnon Development Corp., to hasten the electrification of the community.

He said power would be available in the area in May.

"Pero, sa ngayon, bigyan niyo po kami ng kaunting panahon para maayos ang mga problema. Please help us. Let us help each other," De Castro told the residents.

Resident Jolinda Romero said many of the 3,000 families in Northville 6 were planning to abandon their housing units because of the condition of the relocation site and the lack of livelihood opportunities there.

The residents, who were formerly living along the Philippine National Railway track in the city, moved to Northville 6 in November last December last year.

Romero said they want Dr. Castro to inform him of the residents' actual conditions as the relocation site.

She said many residents also complained that their water connection were not there while septic tanks were built.

In an earlier interview, Federico Lanz, NHA general manager, said water samples from 60 of the 106 deep wells built in the relocation site have passed the Department of Health's standards.

Lanz said the remaining 46 deep wells were being tested.

An assessment done by the Department of Education also showed that a school building with at least nine classrooms is needed in the area to accommodate children of residents.

Mayor Eneito Domingo said the city government and local business groups have committed to fund the construction of four classrooms in the community.

—Carmela Reyes, PIA Central Luzon/BotR

Gov says ₱200-M landslide donation intact

By Jaen Arnado
PDI Visayas Bureau

ST. BERNARD, SOUTHERN Leyte—Gov. Roselyn Lerias has released no accounting of at least ₱200 million in donations so far received for the victims of the Guinsaugon landslide amid questions on where these went.

The governor, in a conference here Friday commemorating the 60th day of the Feb. 17 landslides, said there remains received a total of ₱188 million.

The Philippine National Red Cross got ₱160 million; the Southern Leyte Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC), about ₱16 million; and the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC), ₱6 million.

The total amount did not include donations received by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) and the national government, through President Macapagal-Arroyo, that reached about ₱15 million, provincial officials here said.

Lerias, St. Bernard Mayor Mario Lin and Red Cross officials made the public accounting during the joint PDCC and MDCC meeting held at the lobby of the St. Bernard municipal hall on Friday.

It was attended by some Guinsaugon survivors and evacuees from five endangered villages, many of whom wanted to know where the donations went.

Lerias said she entrusted the handling accusation that she kept some of the donations.

"We have been very transparent with our dealings. You can look into the records of [the cheques], which are all receipted," the governor said.

Lerias also said not all donations would go to Guinsaugon because there are other areas surrounding Guinsaugon that have to be cleared of residents because they are also at risk from landslides.

Of the donations that went to the Red Cross, ₱11 million came from local individual sources; ₱17.5 million from local companies or institutions; and ₱128.7 million from foreign corporations or institutions.

The Guinsaugon victims are, meanwhile, already assured of relocation as a 1.7-hectare lot in Barangay Magkapagay, about 2 km south of the town proper of St. Bernard.

The lot was acquired for ₱9 million from the cash donations that the municipal government received, according to Lin.

Residents of three of five other endangered villages—Hinabian, Magatas and Sagugan—which were also evacuated, would be relocated to Barangay Cartagan, 4 km north of Guinsaugon.

'Punks 11' sue cops for rights violation

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE 11 backpackers whom police said were among the suspected communist rebels who raided an army detachment in Mankayan town in February filed charges against the police for allegedly extorting their rights when they were arrested without warrants.

The group, called "Punks 11" by human rights lawyers here, filed the complaint on Friday before the Benguet prosecutor's office.

They said the six policemen who arrested them on Feb. 19 while they were on their way to Baguio, Dr. Providence failed to show them arrest warrants.

The lawyers of the backpackers said the policemen were accused of violating the suspects' rights under Republic Act No. 7438, the law defining the rights of persons arrested, detained or taken under custodial investigation.

The suspects earlier complained that policemen took them up after their armed host Benguet police officials to behind the chairs.

Named in the complaint were Supt. Oscar Mallanao, Senior Insp. Joseph Pedro Bayangyang, SPO2 Alyson Batang-ad, PO2 Jonathan Pacyo, PO2 Wendell Bagbas and PO2 Lauren Igsan Jr.

Senior Supt. Villanor Bumanglag, Benguet police director, said they believed that the suspects were among the group of New People's Army rebels who raided the Binoklayan detachment.

"There is nothing to say because the case is already in court. But we stand by [our] belief that they were the ones who raided the detachment," Bumanglag said in a telephone interview.

In a preliminary hearing on Thursday at the regional trial court here, police said they stopped the dump truck, where the 11 backpackers hitched a ride, in a checkpoint in Sagubo town.

Lawyer Randy Kimand, one of the backpackers' lawyers, said the police told the backpackers that they had the right to remain silent and the right to be represented by a lawyer.

But Kimand said the police violated the law when they questioned the backpackers without the presence of their lawyers.

Last week, lawyer Pablito Sarabia of the Free Legal Assistance Group and officials of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance asked Judge Benigno Calangyan to dismiss the robbery with homicide charges filed against the suspects.

The charges were related to the death of two soldiers and a militiaman and the seizure of at least 23 firearms during the raid.

—Native Cafiero, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Hundreds mourn slain student leader

MOBO, SORSOGON—RAIN failed to stop hundreds of relatives, friends and supporters of slain student leader Gio Bugtas, who joined the St. Michael the Archangel Church in Mobo in Barangay Monbon in Sorsogon City on Friday afternoon.

Bunker-hauling students and members of the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity also joined outside the church as the necrological service went underway.

Vener Cruzemann, national chair of the militant League of Filipino Students (LFS), said thugs was the first youth and student leader slain since the government launched a crackdown against militant leaders in the country.

Bugtas was killed by a lone assailant in the evening of March 19 in Albay district.

Police had not identified his killer yet.

In her eulogy, Maria Ispolora, Gio' former teacher in elementary, said the bullets that stopped Gio would never be able to stop his dreams and visions.

"Why are there still killings even after Presidential Proclamation 1017 had been lifted?" she asked referring to President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of a national state of emergency.

Bikgal Pronsolino Mongo, provincial prison of Sorsogon City, who was among the six priests that officiated the requiem Mass, urged the people to continue with the fight for justice and for what is right.

"The fight with love in your heart," he said.

Cruzemann said demonstrations and rallies will continue nationwide to protest Gio' death.

A thousands of students of that town lined in the streets as the hearse carrying Gio proceeded to the cemetery under a gloomy sky.

Maritess Lopez, spokesperson of the Justice for Gio Movement, described the declaration of Mr. arrest of military officers, like Maj. Gen. Aurelio Baligasan, as heroic despite their dismal human rights record while declaring activists demanding truth and justice as enemies of the state.

Meanwhile, Dean Dilda Ver go, of the Bicol University College of Arts and Letters, said the bereave that the school had already made an appeal to Albay Gov. Joey Salceda for help for the expedition needs of the case.

A letter making the appeal was also signed by BU President Antonio Calbetela.

"Those who killed you are animals," said Gio' mother as the sobbed while Gio' remains were being buried. Bobby Q. Labonio, PDI Bicol Bureau Luzon Bureau

MOURNERS, relatives and family gather at the St. Michael the Archangel Church in Mobo, Sorsogon for bury slain student leader Cris Hugo.

MILF says it's wary of pledges of int'l aid support

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has welcomed international donors' pledges of support for war-torn Mindanao, but said it would adopt a very cautious approach to it.

Mohammad Ameen, head of secretariat of the MILF central committee, said the international donors' pledges could be "doable-edged and could eventually destroy the organization [MILF]."

He said that while the MILF welcomes international support for the peace process, through aid packages to conflict-affected areas, it opposes any effort by the government, donor countries or nongovernment organizations to use these to undermine support for the MILF.

"We do not want this money to be used against us by normalizing the situation without really solving the Bangsamoro problem," he said in a statement, adding that the MILF does not want to conflict the face of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

He said the MILF had a good relation for the Bangsamoro people but failed to institute effective measures to sustain the gains of their struggle.

On Friday, international donors pledged to increase assistance to support the government's efforts to bring peace to Mindanao, long troubled by a Moro insurgency.

"The President told us about the progress being made on the Mindanao peace process. He emphasized the importance of an early peace agreement as growth and greater inclusion," World Bank country director Joachim von Amsberg told reporters in Tagaytay City following the Mindanao development forum attended by President Benigno Aquino.

The Mindanao Working Group subsequently considered ways to support the government's peace and development initiatives, especially for conflict-prone areas that have thus far been neglected," said Amsberg who recently visited Mindanao to check on development projects.

But Ameen said the MILF leadership has learned from the mistakes made by the government and the MNLF.

The government and the MNLF first led by Nur Misuari, signed a peace deal in 1996 aimed at ending the Moro rebellion.

Ameen said the money was taken in the name of the Bangsamoro people and the MILF as recipient, but the money last went to the pockets of government traders, NGOs, and low ranking MNLF commanders.

He said in the end, Misuari was made the scapegoat, accused of corruption and incompetence in governance, which largely was not true.

Ameen also clarified that the MILF has not made an official appeal to the international community for aid and vowed to see that the peace panels of the government and MILF has listed guidelines on how the money would be spent. Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

World looks back on Pope John Paul the Great

Catholics will have to wait for John Paul's sainthood

VATICAN CITY—DIE, LIKE POPE JOHN Paul II may be a near certainty to join the panoply of Christian saints, shrined as he was by millions during his lifetime, but the message from those closest to the cause for his canonization is that it won't happen anytime soon.

"The road is long, there's still a lot of work to do," said Monsignor Slawomir Oder, the 48-year-old Polish priest overseeing the investigation of miracles attributed to the late pope.

Proof of one miracle attributed to John Paul II is required before he can be "beatified," the first step to sainthood. A second miracle is then needed in his intercession with God would be necessary for full sainthood.

John Paul II died April 2 last year, reportedly calling down on his deathbed before slipping into a coma, "Let me go to the Lord."

During his massive funeral a week later, banners appeared in the crowd demanding that the pontiff be made a "saint now."

Just a month after then, the new Pope Benedict XVI dispensed with the normal five-year waiting period which traditionally, in most past history, is a prelude of beatification—the next step—to sainthood.

He promptly announced the cause of beatification of John Paul II to begin.

Oder has since undertaken an investigation into the life and virtues of the late pope, and formally interviewed many of the people who knew him, including former Polish president Lech Walesa.

Poles are especially proud of "their" pope, and many hope that Benedict would announce his predecessor's beatification when he travels to the country in late May.

It is however Poznan, a secular university which could see juvenile proof of the miracle needed for the Polish pope to be beatified.

At a hearing kept secret by church authorities, Oder presided over a hearing earlier this month into a French nun's claims that she was miraculously healed of Parkinson's disease when she prayed to the late pope.

The identity of the nun, who claimed her cure took place last October, has not been made public.

Other told Italy's state broadcaster RAI this week that another alleged miracle, this time the healing of a man suffering from an incurable brain disease in the United States, would also be investigated.

His task is made considerably easier because many of those who knew the pope throughout his life are still alive.

Moreover, if he is confident plots calling, in December, 11 dissident Catholic theologians who have "distorted" the teachings of the late pope's pontificate to be investigated.

In particular they cited his rigidly conservative stand on issues such as contraception, the role of women and sexual abuse scandals within the Church.

Once the inquiry by the Rome diocese is completed, the report will be passed to the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, which reviews or later is likely to propose that Benedict recognize his predecessor's "heroic virtues" and proclaim him "blessed" at a beatification ceremony.

John Paul II is himself known to the greatest "saint maker" in the history of the Catholic Church. He created more saints—482—in the more than 26 years of his pontificate than all the other popes put together. AFP

Front page A1

For most Gen Xers half the world's one billion Catholics, he was the only pope they had ever known.

This weekend Rome will relive, firstly out in mind back to the extraordinary events of last year, when some three million people flocked to Rome to pay their respects to the late pope.

Rome's streets were filled by a tide of humanity as mourners waited their turn to tearfully file past his body as it lay in state in St. Peter's basilica.

Thousands kept overnight in the Via della Conciliazione, the broad avenue which leads to the Vatican, to get a vantage point at his funeral. Some 300,000 attended the requiem Mass, celebrated by the man who succeeded him, the dean of the College of Cardinals Joseph Ratzinger.

Commemoration rites

This weekend, commanders are having held across the world to mark the anniversary of the death of John Paul II, while up to 300,000 pilgrims are expected to attend a special prayer vigil led by his successor Benedict XVI of the Vatican.

The leader of the Roman Catholic Church will recite the rosary from his window overlooking St. Peter's Square on Sunday evening, at the precise moment the Polish pontiff passed away, 9.37 p.m. (3.37 a.m. in Manila), the Vatican said.

John Paul II died on April 2 after a long battle against crippling illness, ending a 26-year pontificate in spiritually of 1.1 billion Catholics.

Benedict XVI, the Germanborn's former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, was elected on April 19.

Rome's police chief Achille Serra told journalists Friday that organizers were expecting "at least 300,000" pilgrims to attend the commemoration, around half arriving from elsewhere in Italy.

Some 5,000 pilgrims are expected from John Paul II's native Poland.

"The organizational effort in Rome has risen with greater numbers in the past," said Serra, adding attendees to the overwhelm pilgrims who arrived in Rome for the funeral of the pope last year.

Sunday's ceremony will begin with prayers, hymns and readings from the works of John Paul II organized by the Rome diocese, of which the pope is bishop.

On Monday, Benedict will celebrate a solemn memorial Mass for John Paul II in St. Peter's square at 5.00 p.m. (11.00 p.m. Manila).

Most poignant

Other commemorations are taking place in Mexico, Montevideo, Manila and across the Catholic world, where the faith's 1.1 billion members will be asked to remember the former pope, who visited 104 countries during his more than 26-year papacy.

But perhaps the most poignant commemorations will take place in Krakow's Wawel Cathedral, where a special Mass will be celebrated by John Paul. His former private secretary, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz.

Dziwisz has asked Poles to wear a white ribbon on the anniversary, as a symbol of their "gratitude and joy" at knowing the late pope.

The following day, the bells of Wawel Cathedral will be rung at 9.37 p.m. during a special prayer Mass in which the Cardinal will receive a torch being carried Olympic flame style from John Paul II's tomb in Rome.

"Lolek's torch"—a reference to a nickname for Karol Wojtyla used by relatives and friends—was lit from the Holy Door, a candle used in the vault in the crypt of St. Peter's.

A Mass will also take place outside the birthplace of the former pope in Wadowice.

Simple tomb swamped by tourists

The anniversary is expected to be one even greater interest in John Paul II's tomb, situated close to the Apostle Peter, in the crypt of St. Peter's.

Since his demise, the simple tomb has been visited by at least three million people. Swarming with the Colosseum and the Roman Forum, a tickets on the Roman tourist trail.

Books and movies detailing the life of the late pope have been released to coincide with the anniversary, including one book which recounts the recollections of those at the Vatican who were close to him.

"Let Me Go to the Lord"—his last words, according to his personal doctor Renato Buzzonetti, is the title of a book co-authored by the octogenarian's doctor, Dziwisz and Angelo Comastri, Vicar General to the Vatican City.

In the book, the doctor reveals that the Vatican kept secret for five years news that the pope had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease—which he developed in 1994—even though the symptoms were visible to the world.

Faithful secretary

Dziwisz, the faithful secretary of four decades who was elevated to cardinal by Benedict following proof of John Paul II's undying popularity.

The 65-year-old Krakow archbishop was by far the most popular of the 13 new cardinals in the Rome after, both of the consistory, when a mass silenced to him at the Vatican to receive well-wishers was thronged to overflowing. AFP

"SPOKESMAN OF THE CONSCIENCE OF HUMANITY" was called a year ago today but his words as the dominant moral voice of the age, in victory over communism, and architect of Christian renewal Reuters reads from, is undiminished.

US hospitals . . .

From page A1

peaked at 700 pounds. When her son was born three years ago, "I had to sit in the hospital bed the whole time—the hospital's recliner wouldn't fit my body."

Today Brook helps Baptist Jewish Hospital in St. Louis find better ways to deal with the growing number of very obese patients, an issue for many hospitals in the United States where obesity is a growing problem. Baptist Jewish is expanding beds and wheelchairs with bigger models, widening doorways, buying larger CT scan machines, even replacing slippery surfaces.

Last year, patients care director Colleen Becker decided to check the numbers. She looked at a daily hospital census—about one-third of the 500 patients weighed 350 pounds (158 kilograms) or more.

Becker, a burly 6-foot-plus (1.80-meter) guy, then another. The numbers were confirmed. On some days, half the patients were obese. Some weighed 500 pounds (225 kilograms) or more.

'Bariatric care'

"We ran the data again to make sure we weren't hallucinating," Becker said. "We weren't. It's not hard to remember figures in the opposition supplies, equipment, training and care for the patients we're dealing with."

The answer was a "bariatric care team," which Brook serves on, to address the challenges posed by obese patients. Those challenges are many.

Hospitals around the nation are working with equipment suppliers to accommodate larger patients, said Elizabeth Ucci, a spokeswoman for the American Hospital Association. And it's not just for the patients.

Ucci said a survey of nurses representing 79,000 nurses and other workers at hospitals in 18 states, last week called for new laws forcing hospitals to buy equipment such as portable scales to prevent worker injuries.

A union-commissioned survey of more than 800 nurses and 50 by technicians found the majority have chronic pain or have suffered injuries from lifting and moving patients.

Lift machines

At Baptist Jewish, 20 machines help some patients get in and out of bed. Chairs have been made stronger and wider. Lights have been installed at floor level because the bodies of extremely obese people can cast a shadow that makes it hard to see the floor.

The hospital is replacing many of its beds—built to handle people weighing up to 500 pounds—with beds for 600-pound patients.

"Three-hundred-fifty pounds is sometimes what we need for beds now," said Jay Holmes, a nurse manager at Baptist Jewish. "We've had some 650 pounders up here."

Some wings of Baptist Jewish are replacing 36-inch-wide doorways with doorways that are 48 or 52 inches (122 or 132 centimeters) wide. The bathrooms are being fitted with floor-mounted commodes that cannot be pulled out of the wall, and rooms awaiting word on patients can essentially get out of bed and step into the bathroom.

Bigger gowns

Gowns are bigger. Wheelchairs are wider. Even hospital-issued slippers come in extra-large sizes because the standard-issued footies were curling off circulation for some patients.

Issues extend beyond the patient's room. Open wing toilets have been widened because the girth of some patients who topping over the toilet in some cases fell the step to the floor, Becker said. CT scan machines weren't wide enough. Syringes with the longest available needles—3 1/2 inches (11.43 centimeters)—could not penetrate the fat.

Along with doctors and nurses, the hospital's 300-member dietary staff includes Dennis Pointer. Pointer, like Heidi and people from the hospital's engineering and housekeeping staffs.

Heidi, 43, represents both patients and those who try to help the obese—she is program manager for Washington University's weight-management program.

She's been a bearer of bad news as she conducts—she uses as height. Heidi does by age 3. "Everybody in my family is at least 200 pounds overweight," she said.

Genetic factors, surgery seven years ago helped her shed some weight, but she has dropped to 340 pounds (152 kilograms) mostly through better eating and exercise.

Still, she knows what larger people go through in the hospital.

Dignity for all

"I believe in dignity for whomever you are," Heidi said. "If you're grumpy, and you're crying to lift you up and somebody doesn't have the strength, it's very sorry."

Based on recommendations from the team, Baptist Jewish has developed a protocol for lifting heavy patients.

The hospital is also working with suppliers. Mindful of profit, they have their 3,000 items specifically for obese patients, said Sandy Wax, of Stryker LLC, a Texas-based company that provides monitoring services between hospitals and manufacturers.

"It's been a sexual profitable for the last four or five years," Wax said. "Hospitals are outsourcing to see and to provide to obese patients, and it affects every department. You have to think of the patient from head to toe, everything they do in the hospital until they walk out the door or they die."

In fact, Baptist Jewish is striving to make sure the end never dignified. Brooks said the new wing has a heavy-proof body bag. Some patients were so large they wouldn't fit in them. The hospital is working with a retailer to develop a wider bag. AP

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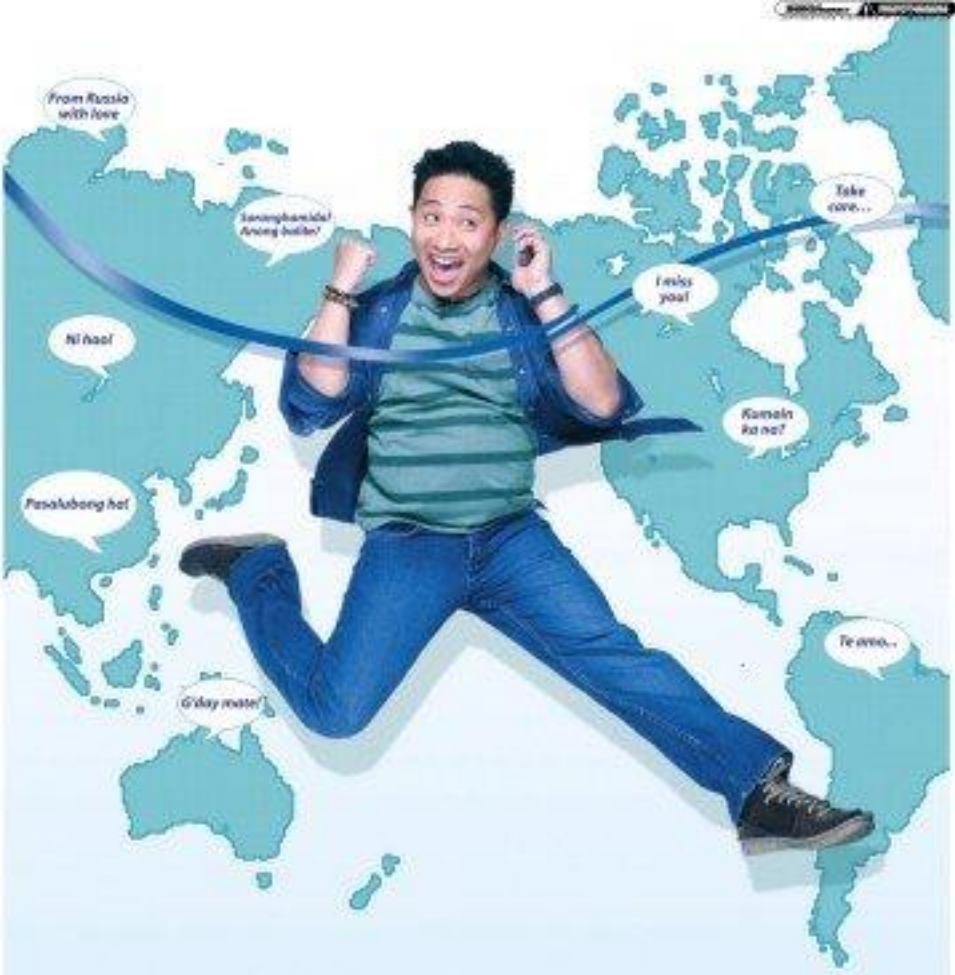

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CASTILLO is one of the Manila Police's two highest-ranking policewomen

MPD's little big woman heads all-female SWAT team

Supt. Lilian Castillo fulfills childhood dream

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A WOMAN IN THE SWAT TEAM?

There's reason.

Supt. Lilian Castillo is chief of the Manila Police District's (MPD) elite all-female Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team.

SWAT units mainly are deployed to handle situations beyond the scope of ordinary policemen because of limitations in equipment or expertise.

"The special all-female SWAT team was formed last year because there are times when female police officers are needed to handle delicate situations," Castillo said. For instance, she said, female SWAT members were positioned on stairs to handle women hostage situations to avoid accusations of sexual harassment.

To qualify, members of the all-women SWAT team had to go through a rough regimen of obstacle courses and special exercises "to toughen their muscles" under Lt. Roger Lindewall, a former member of the Swedish Marines. The team was later deployed to the front lines of the CCM mess at the height of the anti-administration rallies last October.

"The presence of the female police officers somehow softened the image of our male counterparts who were accused of indiscriminately busting militants and protesters during crowd control and dispersal operations," Castillo said.

High-ranking policewoman

One of the MPD's two highest ranking policewomen, the spunky Castillo, who holds a rank equivalent to that of a lieutenant colonel in the military service, also heads the MPD's Civil Disturbance Management (CDM) unit and the District Intelligence and Investigation Division (DIID) investigation section.

She had for someone who was always positioned as the head of a line during school activities when she was growing up as a runaway, pint-sized kid in Nueva Ecija.

"Although I had always dreamt of becoming a police official, I never expected to become one because of my physique," an amused Castillo told the Inquirer, referring to her height of 5'3" and small built.

Luckily, it was not in her character to be daunted by obstacles. When the opportunity to lead the newly created female SWAT team presented itself, the 44-year-old police official agreed to the assignment without any second thoughts.

As chief of these special units, Castillo recalled several instances in which she had to change into three different uniforms after her superiors requested her to head the SWAT team, the CDM unit and the DIID's monitoring group during a rally, all on the same day.

Multitasking expert

"I've always been an expert at multitasking," said the police official who began her career on the force as a lowly patrolwoman in 1986. After all, Castillo endured the rigors of traveling all the way to the Philippine College of Criminology (PCCR) in Manila from Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija, where she was assigned as a rookie police officer, to complete her master's degree.

Not that her previous assignments were any less hectic. Before joining the Manila police force, Castillo served as aide-de-camp to then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo, both on land and underwater.

Castillo said her dedication to her work stemmed from a childhood dream to emulate her policeman father. "I wanted to become a policeman like him, but I did not want to end up in the same pit of disillusionment and frustration," she said.

CASTILLO once served as aide-de-camp to then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, both on land and underwater.

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JANE Walker (second from right) with some of the children her foundation—the Philippine Christian Foundation Inc.—helped put through school.

Sweet charity unearths treasures in Tondo dump

UK-funded foundation helps poor Filipino children map out rosier future

By Tina S. Santos

DEEP IN THE HEART OF STA. Tondo, a woman with a heart of gold is helping children of garbage pickers or scavengers, as they are often called, make their dreams come true.

For Jane Walker, a British national who has been in the country for nearly 13 years, the sight of children wandering around and collecting garbage to help their families earn a living instead of being in school touched her heart.

This prompted Walker to establish the Philippine Christian Foundation Inc. (PCFI), a nongovernment organization which aims to help disadvantaged children and their families look forward to a better future through various education projects.

In Tondo, PCFI has started a preschool in the Helping Hands Day Building at the Smokey Mountain Temporary Housing Sixth Five, 18, a dilapidated structure where over 300 children, aged 3-16 years old, living on and around the dump, were being educated, fed and clothed.

Just recently, about 80 children in nursery and the kindergarten level graduated to the delight of their proud parents.

'Incredibly bright'

"It is a huge achievement for these children and their families to complete one year education," Walker said. "Many of them are incredibly bright. I believe we found treasures in the dump. They are the most amazing kids and their understanding and relationship is important."

She added, "The waste-picking communities need help to survive and every child deserves the right to have an education, a hot meal everyday and the chance to make choices to change their own futures."

P180 yearly tuition

Parents only pay P180 a year for their kids' tuition.

"The parents go on a payment plan because they can only afford to pay P18 a month. But we don't believe in doing something for free. We believe that this is their project so we would like them to contribute to it in any way they can," she explained.

Walker said the parents also help out by cleaning and decorating the school, doing kitchen duty, and assisting during field trips.

Life-changing visit

The 43-year-old Walker said she was inspired to start her charity work when she came to the country in 1996.

She recalled that she found her "true calling" during a visit to a public cemetery in Tanauan and Smokey Mountain in Tondo.

"I went to a dump and saw lots of children working in it. I went to the cemetery and found children living there too. I promised that I would build a daycare center for the children," Walker said.

She was as good as her word. In 1998, Walker built and funded a small school in the Tanauan public cemetery, which was also home to 300 families who could barely make ends meet, much less send their children to school.

In 2003, she started the school in Smokey Mountain, Tondo.

Eager to learn

"Mingling with these children, I was happy to find out that they were very keen and eager to learn. They gave me the push to start my plans for them," she told the inquirer.

Aside from the children in Tanauan and Tondo, the PCFI has also been providing education to underprivileged children in a dump in Baguio and Bacolod.

At present, Walker juggles her time between Manila and the United Kingdom where she holds fund-raising activities.

"My dream is to build a school which could educate every child who is working or living in the dump or cemeteries from preschool to high school," said Walker, who intends to stay permanently in the Philippines with her 8-year-old son starting this August.

"I see an much potential in these children and their families. I don't see them as scavengers. I see them as professional recyclers. I see them as examples of the Filipino people because they're hardworking, they make the best of bleak situations, and best of all, they do it with a smile. To me that is the strength of the Filipino and it is a great privilege to serve them in whichever way we can," Walker said.

Those who wish to send donations may contact the PCFI at Medical Plaza 4th Floor, Ort 432, Ashadze 20-ser in Ermita Manila, or call (02) 3620410 or e-mail jane@pcf.org

THE PCFI also provides its beneficiaries with food, clothing and medicine.

A CHILD in a depressed community receives medicine from a volunteer.

Work abroad now, pay later program set

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

PLANNING TO WORK ABROAD but wondering how to pay your fare? Residents in Rodriguez, Rizal, can go to their municipal hall.

Not that they will be given instant cash. But the local government is now willing to help them get them a loan for their placement fees.

"There are many qualified workers in our town but they don't get a chance to work abroad because they don't have enough money," Mayor Pedro Cuerpo told the INQUIRER.

But through his program called "Work abroad now, Pay later," the Montalban Overseas and Labor Employment Office of the municipality will help qualified workers get loans from formal lending institutions like the Philippine National Bank, with whom the local government had already signed an agreement.

"Many aspirants have been borrowing money from lenders who charge steep interests, so we thought of this program to help them," Cuerpo added in Filipino.

The program, launched in January, has already benefited at least 12 workers. Two of them left earlier while 11 female workers left for Taiwan's semiconductor factory to work in an electronics assembly plant.

SPD looking forward to Holy Week

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AUDREY SE ARE HIS 8888 would be happy ensuring the safety of people who would be going home to the provinces during Holy Week, Southern Police District director Chief Supt. Wilfredo Cayetano believes the task would not be as difficult compared to last year.

Cayetano said the commuters were unusual, for instead of the heavens, because the police were on their toes to prevent possible crucifixion attacks following the Roman-jail siege.

The March 15, 2004 incident resulted in the death of 22 suspected Abu Sayyaf members, including the top three leaders of the bandit group, who were detained at the Metro Manila Director Jail in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City.

More 1,500 policemen have already been deployed on the streets of southern Metro Manila to ensure peace and order and prevent terrorist elements from striking during the weeklong holidays, the police said.

The police will also be securing churches and other places of worship where thousands of Catholics are expected to gather to observe Holy Week.

Car salesman loses SUV to thieves in parking lot

By Oji Yap

A CAR SALESMAN LOST A SPORTS utility vehicle to car thieves at the parking lot of a mall in Quezon City on Friday.

Michael Ty, 28, a sales representative of Nissan North Edsa, parked a gamet Nissan Xterra on Tomas Clemente and Commonwealth Avenue to meet a client at about 2 p.m., according to police.

When he and a companion came back, the SUV was already gone, according to investigator PO1 Diosdado Bacera of the Batasan Hills Police.

The SUV was a 2005 model with conduction sticker number UMD179, Ty told police. It was valued at P2.256 million, he said.

The case was turned over to the Quezon City's anti-car theft unit.

Meanwhile, police recovered on Friday a stolen motorcycle that was used as a getaway vehicle in a robbery two days before.

A Honda XR 200 with plate number PT 0128 was found in front of 504 Cubao Compound, Tandang Sora, a day after it was reportedly used by a thief to rob another motorist.

The motorcycle was earlier reported to have been used by the unidentified thief to rob Gil-ortech Electronic Service shop Bergalado Street in Barangay Lagro on March 29.

Gun in one hand, rosary in the other

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AN INVISIBLE BOY WAS found dead inside his room in Taguig City before dawn yesterday in his left hand, he held a rosary and in the other right, he held a gun.

Police said Jaime Ocampado Jr., a janitor nursing student of the city, lives in Old College and a resident of Sto. Niño Homes, BFSU-IM in Barangay Western Bicutan, probably committed suicide.

Initial investigation said Ocampado did not answer when his brother-in-law, Michael Cardova, knocked on his door several times at about 9:45 a.m. Cardova found the door open and found Ocampado with a gunshot wound in the head. His girlfriend, Kathlyn Garcia, told the police that the victim had been depressed for months due to "family problems."

QC welcomes summer with monofin swimming

By Oji Yap

THE SEASON OF SUN, SEA AND sand, learn how to swim like "mermaid."

Summer has officially begun in the country with the introduction of monofin swimming, a technique that resembles the way mythical mermaids move in the water.

In the hope of developing enough talent to compete internationally, Quezon City has organized the first ever monofin swimming program for the youth in the Philippines, according to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.

Monofin swimmers use a single-bladed synthetic made of glass fiber or carbon fiber that is attached to their feet.

Because of the tail-like appearance of the monofin, a monofin swimmer resembles a dolphin—or a mermaid.

The training of youngsters, aged between 10 and 15, in monofin swimming will begin today at the Amoranto Sports Complex, said Quezon City administrator Benjamin Ochoa Jr.

The city tied up with Dive Republic, a private training company for divers and swimmers, for the project in line with Quezon City's Youth and Sports Development program.

At the launch last Friday, Ochoa invited the youth to take part in the swimming program.

MPD's little big woman heads all female SWAT team

Front page 4-12

first," she said.

Castillo, the eldest of five girls, recalled that her father Eduardo, a former barangay captain from Carmenglan, Nueva Ecija, was appointed by the mayor as a policeman in the early 1970s.

The elder Castillo, however, did not make it to the position of police officer because he was not able to get a college education.

"I witnessed my father being humiliated by the other policemen who looked down on him," Castillo said.

She also remembered that her dad was always absent whenever she received an award given for outstanding grades in school. "He wanted to pin on my medals and ribbons, but he could not because he had to stay behind to follow some police official's orders."

Followed in father's footsteps

Despite her father's unhappy experiences in the workplace, Castillo said she was inspired to follow in his footsteps—albeit in a different direction.

"I promised myself that I would be somebody someday that I would return to my town and redeem my father's name of dignity and honor," she said.

The police official proved to be an amateur prophet. The passing years saw her steady rise from a low patrolwoman to police inspector, and then as the inventor's aide de camp when she was vice president.

Castillo's assignments took her to Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija; Angeles City, Pampanga; and Camp Crame in Quezon City, where she earned various awards as an outstanding police officer.

Her growing responsibilities, however, did not prevent her from undergoing various training programs and seminars to improve her skills.

Scuba diving, motorcycle riding

"I even trained in motorcycle riding and scuba diving," Castillo said. "I wanted to explore different fields, something my father would have done if he had been given the chance."

Her training came in handy when she was assigned as a member of the Presidential Security Group in 2001.

"My skills earned me a place in President Macapagal-Arroyo's good boy valentine she wishes dived," Castillo proudly said. "I was the only PSG member who had the privilege of guarding her underwater," the police woman added.

Castillo was also assigned to head the PSG motorcycle team and motor pool unit, where she was responsible for maintaining the Pres Ford's vehicles.

"I had a heavy heart when I left the PSG last year, but I explained to the President that it was part of my career advancement and growth as a person," she said.

Self-improvement

According to Castillo, she has learned a very valuable lesson from her experiences. That improving one's self is something you have to do on your own.

"Even when I cannot be the best in a particular field, I try hard to be among the best by continuously learning and not giving up on my goals," the police official said.

From a remote, mountain town in the east of the most powerful family in the country, to the home of Malacañang Palace, Castillo has truly made good on her childhood vow.

AS HEAD of the Manila Police's Civil Disturbance Management Unit, Castillo was at the frontline of riot policemen tasked to guard against unruly protesters at the height of antigovernment rallies last year.

GLOBAL Pinoy
Editor Gavin Lirio

E-mail us: global_pinoy@inquirer.com.ph
Give us your feedback:

This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world, and wherever work can be unionized to ensure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

Daughter proud of OFW parents, speaks 4 languages

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PERPETUALLY ANIMATED CLASS settled down as soon as the girl with streaks of magenta in her hair walked up front.

Hired was that this girl, then classmate Jan Warnil got a British accent. They were all eager to hear her do a mock newscast a la CNN or BBC.

Jan, 19, gamely chirped her throat then began reading a made-up story on an alcohol-fueled Filipino-Australian student in class, offenders, and understandably first-timers.

A sophomore journalism student at the University of Santo Tomas, Jan actually speaks four languages, and British English is just one of them.

She's also fluent in French and has a competent grasp of Cantonese, Tagalog, and Waray, her parents' native tongues.

A song writer, drummer, keyboard player, and vocalist—she's also known for all three, a multi-talented musician.

But for anyone to forget, she's most importantly the daughter of two hardworking OFW parents, the would-after remitted friends.

"That's who I am and I always tell people that," she says in an interview with the Inquirer.

Jan is true with pride whenever her parents, both of them working in Hong Kong, come up in a conversation. Their struggle in the former British colony defined her character, she would say.

Musician father

Hired times sent her father Antonio packing from their small house in Alang-Alang, Leyte for a musician's job in Hong Kong in 1987. His job as a local band in Tacloban had offered no bright hopes for his newborn daughter and wife Cherry.

Soon, 13, was hired as a keyboardist at an all-Filipino band playing country music at the New World Renaissance Hotel.

The following year, he took his wife and daughter to live with him. They settled at a 12-square-meter shop shared with other OFWs working at the hotel at Hoang Fong's Tsim Sha Tsui District in Kowloon.

Soon, Cherry found a job as a waitress at a Korean restaurant. That, too, kept her busy most of the time like her husband.

Jan grew up alone in the company of Filipino neighbors next door. By the time she was old enough for school, she knew she was getting painful lessons in real life.

"I grew up with the image of both of my parents always working," she recalls. "While they were out, I was being 'street-ed' in a way that we don't usually find in books."

A companion in need

Jan, for instance, learned that survival is a far-off place like Hong Kong depended heavily on hard work, surrender to chance or recklessness and you'll end up hungry and broke.

She learned, too, that Pinoys would never abandon a compatriot caught in misery or need.

One time, she remembered her family having almost nothing for dinner. It was difficult to control since they shared a room-size kitchen with other families. The others quarrelled over it and soon a plane or two.

"That was how it worked there—people helped other people even if they didn't have enough for themselves too," Jan says.

It wasn't easy to stay afloat even if her father's job offered roughly HK$7,000 monthly. Besides, he had to work from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. for 10 years straight, without a single day off.

Jan says her father would have preferred to stay on but not the 1997 Asian financial crisis driven him out of his hotel job. The band switched to Latino music, hoping a major musical shift might help extend its stint at the hotel's "fine City."

Chicken dinner

It still didn't and he soon jobless for about a year. By that time, the couple had two other children, Bayanan John and Florence Anthony, and Jan was nearing the end of primary school.

With Cherry's income alone another job, also-ning in a restaurant and school fun.

How the family survived the crisis Jan would never forget. She recalls her mother buying a small pack of "chicken legs" and make it good for a week's meal. Sissy would also shop a small pack to even smaller pieces that each them up with "mixes."

Boiled sausages' brain was a common, though not exactly delectable, alternative for a shard. "It went on for about two years," Jan says.

A hardworking father with no job and a doorstep-to-door friend to work even harder both left a deep impression in their daughter. Soon the began adding why many of their companions in Hong Kong weren't accorded the respect they deserved.

It's a multi-cultural place like Hong Kong, she laments that Pinoys are all "mere" domestic helpers. Even when asked if maids, they too, earn a decent living.

Trash bins for Filipinos

In a way, they're also victims of their own folly, she says. Trash bins in Hong Kong, for example, carry reminders in Tagalog. It means only that Filipinos either need to be reminded.

Jan is considered Cowgirl wasn't often itself especially in a foreign land. But she earned it quite naturally.

While her parents were preoccupied lunch-breaking jobs, she learned herself with her schooling. It wasn't difficult to stand out

THE TRIPLET that stays together (left with Bryan left) watched music Hong musician father Antonio, and brothers Florence and Bayanan in Hong Kong.

SONGS FOR SARS: Jan (left) with friend Charity Dumpit sings a concert at the height of the SARS crisis in Hong Kong.

FAST FACTS

OFW Remittances

Country	2004 (US dollars, in billions)	2005 (estimate in billions)	Rank	Share
USA	$3,800.00	$4,000.00	1	20.00%
Saudi Arabia	$1,200	$1,300.00	2	6.50%
Japan	$1,000.00	$1,000.00	3	5.00%
Kuwait	$700.00	$800.00	4	4.00%
Canada	$600.00	$700.00	5	3.50%
United Kingdom	$500.00	$600.00	6	3.00%
Singapore	$400.00	$500.00	7	2.50%
Qatar (ARE)	$400.00	$500.00	8	2.50%
Germany	$300.00	$400.00	9	2.00%
Australia	$300.00	$400.00	10	2.00%
Hong Kong (SAR)	$300.00	$400.00	11	2.00%
Taiwan	$300.00	$400.00	12	2.00%
Malaysia	$300.00	$400.00	13	2.00%
Switzerland	$200.00	$300.00	14	1.50%
Brunei	$200.00	$300.00	15	1.50%
Italy	$200.00	$300.00	16	1.50%
Netherlands	$200.00	$300.00	17	1.50%
Bahrain	$200.00	$300.00	18	1.50%
Others	$1,000.00	$1,000.00		5.00%
TOTAL	$20,000.00	$20,000.00		100.00%

Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Commission on Filipinos Overseas

for someone so talented as she was.

At the Ateneo de Ville Kindergarten Secondary School in West Rembrandt, Jan made a name as drummer, keyboardist, and vocalist of an acoustic, all-girl and all-Filipino band called "The Disciples." She also had a stint in broadcasting as a Catholic radio program.

They were taught French in school.

When Hong Kong was hit by severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003, Jan and her bandmates came up with a song on the morbid tragedy, emotionally evoking hope amid a dejected community.

The band got a major break later that year when it was invited to perform during the six-month long Temple Street Festival, a local government project to promote tourism.

Japanese fan

Starting break at one gig, a Japanese lady approached the group and asked, "Does come you Filipinos are so good in music?"

Jan smiled. Respect had been earned.

She went back to the Philippines two years ago to finish college here. It was far more expensive in Hong Kong than in Manila and besides, she wanted to experience home.

She packed up and left Manila around exactly the ideal place for a person like Jan who had spent all her life abroad. But she's coping and somehow learning to love it.

"At first I was somehow culture shocked because in Hong Kong, people were so passionate about value. Here, it seemed people were getting away with anything," she says.

To be a waitress

"One thing I learned from our life here is that I can find myself in any situation and I will survive."

Next week, Jan will fly back to Hong Kong for something she had long wanted to do. She'll spend the rest of her summer vacation working positively as a waitress like what her mother used to do.

"My mom tells me to join Polish my studies, it will be my greatest gift to them," she says, noting that Sissy now manages a Mexican restaurant while her father's a building administrator.

"But I feel obliged to work and I like it too. When I look at my family I really want to help them in any way I can."

When in trouble abroad, help is a text away 24/7

By Julie M. Aurelio

FOR MALTREATED FILIPINO WORKERS, help is just a text away 24/7.

The Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) has come up with a text-based mechanism for response for help and reports about distressed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) worldwide.

The SOS Short Messaging System (SOS SMS) was conceptualized and developed by migrant workers in the Middle East who entered a quicker response to distress calls from OFWs.

The CMA promotes the rights of OFWs and their families through policy advocacy, information dissemination, networking and direct assistance.

Eliseo Bana, CMA executive director, said the hotness that the idea for SOS SMS came up during a series of abduction involving Filipino workers in the Middle East.

"SOS SMS offers a way to report quickly cases of distressed OFWs . . . Even if an OFW is in jail, as long as he has access to a cell phone, he can ask for help or intervention from the government," she said in a phone interview.

An OFW must key in SOS <space> <worker's name & message> and send to +63(9)209049[illegible] or +63(9)209049[illegible]. The messages are received by a server computer and forwarded to the CMA and the Department of Foreign Affairs' Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (Dusmw) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa).

IT engineers

Filipino IT engineers in the Middle East developed the system in 2005.

Imee said the system could also be used to conduct polls or surveys, as well as voluntary registration of undocumented OFWs.

She added, "We limit our intervention to referral of the case. We don't take charge of the case." Reports are referred to the Consulate or the Owwa for action.

When it gets a SOS message, CMA asks the OFW to contact the Philippine Embassy or labor office in the country where he/she resides. At the same time, it alerts the government office.

Pedro Chan, Dusmw executive director, said he forwarded cases of distressed OFWs to case officers at the SEA Action Center. Case officers would contact the OFW to verify the report.

Most cases, Chan added, were from OFWs in Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Israel. Complaints range from maltreatment, illegal recruitment of wages, or working without a permit.

Bana noted most cries for help were from men, as they usually had more access to cell phones.

Profiling

In Saudi Arabia, the CMA formed the Pinoy Mission Task Force, a team of OFWs that provide immediate assistance to fellow migrant workers. Bana said Pinoy Mission members were briefed on how to be sensitive and address the plight of workers.

The panel is to be able to give immediate assistance. Not all cases are immediately resolved, especially Chan's of OFWs who are detained or jailed," he told the Inquirer.

Bana said SOS SMS would not only address calls for help. The system allowed CMA to document, index, classify and analyze reported cases of distress in terms of work category, geographical location, gender, forms of abuse and work place, she added.

"In terms of advocacy, SOS SMS gives you a picture of what the problems of the migrant are. It's not here gaps in terms of policies, human resources or implementation? We can see that in the increase of the number of cases reported," she said.

Experimental stage

The CMA, however, still has to finalize a memorandum of agreement with the Dusmw and Owwa. But Chan said the lack of a MOA did not affect the implementation of SOS SMS.

He added that the SOS SMS was still in the experimental stage and the Dusmw and CMA were monitoring the kinks, like identifying emergency cases as when OFWs got involved in accidents or were jailed.

Bana said CMA would eventually have over implementation of SOS SMS in the government. She said the group was also interested in expanding the concept of SOS SMS with migrants of different nationalities.

Positive feedback

"It is a good project. I think it's 10 percent successful so far. But some countries are not sensitive to the concept of SOS SMS with migrants of different nationalities.

Imee said the SOS SMS project had its share of technical glitches, spam and false distress calls but positives. But they also received positive feedback from OFWs through SMS.

"Some people even see to say this is really a good project. It's good that they appreciate it," Imee said. "It helps them a lot. Even if is concrete solution it not achieved immediately, they like OFWs know their voices are being listened to."

For inquiries, please mail the Center for Migrant Advocacy website (http://www.pinoy-abroad.net, or call their office at 9209483.

Hundred Islands lures balikbayans

By Melody Aquila
Contributor

ALAMINOS CITY—GROSSMAN FILIPINO workers (OFWs), mostly from the land of Uncle Sam and many of them professionals, returned to their native soil on a mission.

The over 300 OFWs and their families overtook their same sleepy hometown of Alaminos in Pangasinan. They came from California, United States and Canada, as well as from Europe for a grand alumni homecoming of the Alaminos National High School (now AHS (formerly Alaminos High School)) and the celebration of the feast of the city's patron saint, St. Joseph the Worker last March 19.

The reunion, dubbed Hundred Islands Global Pinoy Homecoming 2006, was initiated by Mayor Hernani Braganza.

The OFWs hoped to share their blessings with the residents of the AHS. They also wanted to help develop the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) as an ecotourism destination.

Living legacy

"We wanted to leave a living legacy in that other Alaminians may follow suit and contribute to the continuing progress of the Hundred Islands and the whole province," said Ed Ilarde, president of the Alaminos City Association of San Diego County (ACSDEC), Alaminos High School Alumni Association International (AHSAAI) and Alaminos, Pangasinan Association of Southern California (APSC-CAL).

They said they learned of the homecoming and flood from the web site of the Philippine Daily Inquirer which featured the rebirth of the islands last year.

Braganza said, "We dedicate this fiesta not only to our hometown from Europe and Northern America, but also to Alaminians outside the Pangasinan province."

Dr. Jimmy Bunoc, concurrent president of ACSDEC and AHSAAI, viewed the support of the organizations' members for their alma mater and hometown.

ALAMINOS Mayor Hani Braganza (second from right) receives members of the Alaminos City Association of San Diego County, Alaminos High School Alumni Association International and Alaminos, Pangasinan Association of Southern California, all wanting to help develop the Hundred Islands as an eco-tourism destination.

He said he was planning to invest in janitorial and security services, agribusiness and the construction of a multilevel mini-hotel with 50 guest rooms and a function hall.

Bunoc, who is also president of the San Diego Executive Lions Club, graduated from the Alaminos High School in 1959 and took up animal husbandry at Araneta University. He got a master's degree in agriculture (animal breeding) and a doctorate in animal science.

He was director of the Manila Zoo from 1986 to 1990, chairman of the Department of Animal Science at the Araneta University before migrating to California in 1991.

Hard work

Life was not easy at first. While collar job seeker hard to come by, Sandikwong Ito pride, he worked as a busboy and washing dish at the Bennington Morning House for the elderly. He also worked in a post office to support his wife Corazon, and five children, including his adopted daughter.

Hard work eventually paid off. He was able to set up a small business, the Quikfast Printing Services. The family built Heights Subdivision near the Capitol Golf Club in Tandang Sora, Quezon City is now home to Bunoc's family in Metro Manila.

"I don't intend to stay in the US. I encourage our kababayan to come home and see what they can do for Alaminos and the country," he said.

"Though I seldom come home, I know what's going on in Alaminos, which has grown from a town into a city. It has improved a lot. The place is clean and the people are more disciplined," Bunoc said.

Registered nurse Pendleumus Kwarens, 55, spent 30 years working at Scripps Mercy Hospital, also in San Diego.

"I am an active member of the alumni association that continues to provide what the school children want. We will raise money once we go back to the States for the procurement of more chairs for these children," she said.

The 1963 graduate of the high school, married a Filipino-born US Navy serviceman in 1971.

Kwarens, who said, she still spoke her native tongue and ate pinakbet, said she had not been home for 10 years.

Nurses

Gloria Balvejo-Williams left Hawaii she had a high-paying job as a registered nurse at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Sacramento, California and a close-knit family of renowned Christians.

"Do you know that a nurse (in the US) receives US$100 per hour?" she asked.

She finished high school in 1966, though she had to stop for a year due to financial difficulties.

"I remember the days when I had to feed the chickens at 4 a.m. and plant tomato seeds. I [would not play] as a child because I had to work hard to help the family," she said.

At 13, she started dreaming of becoming a nurse someday. But poverty compelled her to take up education. A brother with the Philippine Navy spent for her studies at the Northeastern Education Institute in Dagupan City. But she was not content for teaching.

Then luck knocked on her door in 1976. A friend gave her an application form for a nursing scholarship in Scotland.

"I was alone, lonely and very homesick. I was constantly crying and sleeping. Being away from home was very hard. There were only two Filipinos there," she said.

She was, however, determined to pursue her goal.

She finished the nursing board examination the first time but passed the second time.

In 1978, she went to London to work as a full-time nurse. Two years later, she transferred to the US, where he met husband Douglas Williams, an employee of the state's Franchise Tax Board.

SEX AT SEA

Not all seamen want a woman in every port

By Pamela Azarcon-dela Cruz

HE WORKED AS A COOK IN ROTTERDAM-based cruise vessels for 32 years, but Jun Asunan, 55, swears that in all those years, he remained faithful to his wife.

"Iyan ay isa, Asunan's case is highly respected. Iyon—kahit sa hotel, kahit sa gift shop—isa yon sa favorite topic among Filipino seamen who bank in their reputation as charming Lotharios who can have a woman in every port.

In fact, it was this prospect and that of traveling the world while earning dollars that enticed Gregory Cagod, 35, to abandon the guidance counselor's course and pursue a three-year maritime course. For 10 years, Cagod was among the country's more than 300,000 seafarers abroad who sent at least US$1.2 billion to yearly remittances.

Still single

Armed with anticipation and a keen sense of adventure, Cagod was single then and had no wedding arose to stop him from living it up during shore leave. There's just too much pressure from sending onboard a ship, he said. "Wala, marami ang ah-oo ang ah-hindi sa kanila. You are the one who's away one day for 11 months, your honey pells you all the time, you miss your family... you need an outlet to survive."

For seafarers, that means tapping out and drinking in a bar, searching a girls down and having sex.

It didn't help that Filipino sailors were easily the most popular with the girls compared to seamen of other nationalities, observed Jose Fuentes, 36, who'd rather see an older sisters talking about his sex life in the open seas. "Filipino men are known to be passionate and understanding," Fuentes said.

The flight crew was the seamen's favorite target, said Fuentes who worked as one for 24 years. "Mahirap ilusot iyan ang mga air hostess," he said, referring to the male's open access to the food items in the ship. "Ito ang give the seamen any food they want from the kitchen and they know it, too."

The ratio in having "informations" on was bottom from their mind, said Cagod.

STDs, HIV

Lectures on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS prevention were usually given in one of pre-departure orientation seminars (PDOS).

"It really depends on your manning agency. Some manage with seminars," said Fuentes who attended one before boarding a ship.

Asunan observed that, except for the very general "Magpakabait kayo nang husto, magingat sa babae," most PDOS offered little by way of STD prevention.

Most men got their information from colleagues, while others read brochures distributed by one government organization (MGO) among sailors on shore leave, said Tangcil.

But the seminar and brochures were no guarantee the men would practice safe sex, Cagod added. "When the lines down in work, when the tooting begins and the girls start getting amorous, everything flies out the window. Nakalimutan na nila'di. Barang mo kasuotan, the main concern, other stuff, we've been working really hard, we've away from our loved ones, responsibilities have wing flaws. We feel we're entitled to some fun."

Having fun, infection

When the inevitable happens and the men suspect they may have contracted a STD, they turn to confession. "Sir amuse self the captain for we be pulled out and fine one joke," said Cagod.

Interpreted Asunan: "And you only tell your close friends. Isa't kalahati ang sa sa'yo. What the infected' man would do was buy antibiotics at parmacies on the sly and go on self-medication, said Cagod. "There are no supplies on the ship because we're not supposed to have STD. It's a self-guarded secret."

Despite the lack of information, however, Fuentes said he knows when a seaman sees "high-risk" and could tell if the had STD. "First, I look at her genitals. You can tell if they're healthy or if they stink. There'll be lots very hot inside, then she's infected."

Scent of a woman

Cagod agreed. "Yes, they say that if a woman smells and she feels very hot, then she must have STD. After all, she's bound to be feverish when she has infection."

Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio, chair of the board of GROOMS, a women's health and reproductive rights NGO, clarified however, "Fever and a foul discharge are legitimate signs of possible infection or STD but not all STDs [show symptoms]. A few, like HIV-AIDS, can be totally [without symptoms] for years so there's no way of telling."

The basic rule, she said, was to practice safe sex. "The proper use of condoms how to put it on, when to use it is important.

Certain situations and positions make people more vulnerable to STDs, so makes sure must be aware of them and how contraceptives help."

Among themselves, and in the boring confines of an 11-month seaman, the men trade information on their sex needs as well.

Seamen's toys, tools

And Cagod, "To West Africa, our ship travels showing pornovideo movements with a big up some kind of dried twinkle in a bottle that's supposed to make us harder and longer. It's not USED and is supposed to be the genitals of a crocodile, or is it a horse?" He bought one, he said, but was too afraid to try it. "The other guys kept egging me to buy it, but nobody would [use it] without."

But that they talked about sex all the time, Fuentes said, "but when it's late at night and there's no more program on TV, we watch Animal Sex and that's when we talk about seamen."

Fuentes recalled how they missed their wives. Cagod said, "It's very clear to us that the women we meet during shore leave are there strictly for sex. We're not about to have relationships with them out of deference to our families back home."

It was this deference and the thought of leaving their wives that prevented seafarers from showing pornovideo movements and from their extramarital activities with their lifetime partners, said Fuentes. Added Asunan: "I tell my friends, Just never imply to my wife that I may even to just. I don't even want her to think about such things and ruin our relationship as such."

Most seafarers, said Fuentes, didn't offer to wear condoms to protect their wives from STD and HIV-AIDS when they got home. "To do so would be to set up suspicions that I've had sex with other women, and I don't want to risk that."

Condom, guilt, pleasures

Such reticence about using condoms and discussing risk prevention could account for the high percentage of seamen being infected with HIV/AIDS. According to the HIV/AIDS Registry of the National Epidemiology Center of the Health Department, 885 or 14 percent of the 1,373 HIV positive cases are overseas Filipino workers. Of the infected OFWs, 35 percent are seafarers.

Despite the high-risk behavior of their husbands, wives of seafarers also have huge misgivings about bringing up the subject of condoms, according to Dr. Maria Elena T. Bautista, UNAIDS Grant United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS country coordinator. "They don't want their husbands to think they don't trust them so they'd rather keep quiet and hope they won't get infected."

The fact that women were dependent on their husbands also prevented them from speaking up, Bautista added. Guilt also came into the picture. "The wives say, 'Sa sex nawalan na sa amin ng husband, sa sex pa kami mawawalan sa kanya?' Or, 'Kung ako ang nagkasala sa sex, ako ang mawawalan ng husband?'"

Dr. Estrada-Claudio seconds these assessments—willing to improve their negotiation skills on condom use, the doctor added. "But it takes a certain level of maturity and open communication for the women to feel empowered enough to claim their right to protection."

Dr. Estrada-Claudio seemed to see the men, however. "It is more a matter of cultivating among seafarers the right attitudes towards condom. Let's not go anymore into whether they're being suspected as having had sex with other women, or they're scared to use whatever every time they're turned it. Instead, look at what all that is—inconvenience, the diminished pleasure from using condoms, the slight to the ego, is surely not big [somehow]? Safety? The health, safety and life of your wife and kids is [at] at stake. Isn't that worth something?"

Most seamen's wives, like Rita Ogbinar, 33, valued husband Tony saved to be a captain, however knew the inherent risks of ocean travel. "I wanted him to be protected regularly and wrote letters mostly as his thoughts would always be on the family," she said. She suggested condom use once, she admitted, but her husband did not receive it well.

After that, she learned to devise ways to protect herself. "I used the usual ways: douching, regular medical check-ups."

But she was lucky: three near-wives, as homebirded Ogbinar who used to be active in the Seamen's Wives Association of the Philippines (SWAP). "My husband came from a good school and a good family so I knew he's very disciplined and has self-control when it comes to these situations. He's also very religious. Hanggat dito pun. Sa I'm not too worried. He's not about to blow his religious temporary pleasures."

In the meantime, she added, the women could do some religious groups conducting awareness seminars or HIV-AIDS. "Caritas does it for the wives and the Apostleship of the Sea (ASS) does it with seamen from maritime schools. Ahmad, the AOS meets seafarers as they leave the ship and offers them the services of a counselor or lawyer."

Such efforts were commendable, Cagod said, because the NGOs were where seafarers actually were.

Phones and Bibles

And phones, said Seamen, "make sure there's a phone booster that we can use to call our families." Keeping in touch with one's family, he added, was the best way to keep away from temptation. "I can honestly say that I've never had another woman while onboard a vessel," the former entrepreneur said. As a Christian, he turned to the Bible to forget or ignore his physical needs when he couldn't be with his wife, he said.

Fuentes, who had worked as a factory worker, a university guard and as hotel cook before boarding a ship, had another strategy: "I always make sure that I only had enough money for a round of drinks when I leave the ship. That way, no amount of emotion advance can get me off my seat. Before requesting a long ride, eh?"

Cagod said he'd go for other tempting accessories as well. "The main reason to attend abstinence is a family project," he said. "When seafarers are building a house back home, or spending a lot for school or for someone sick, you may young fiancee-ako, they know will control. Whatever else you say, the family always comes first."

Chirac to sign job law, but offers compromise

PARIS—FRENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac announced on TV today he would sign a controversial youth job law despite weeks of protests, but promised it would be amended right away to weaken two of its most disputed reforms.

Trade unions and student leaders promptly rejected his proposals as insufficient and vowed to press on with their protests, including a nationwide strike day next Tuesday.

Even before he spoke, students gathered in Paris and other main cities to continue protests against the First Job Contract (CPE), which will let employers fire workers under 26 without cause during their first two years on the job.

"It is time to defuse the situation," Chirac said in the televised speech, in which he said he understood the concerns of youths who could not find jobs. Youth unemployment is running at 22 percent, high above France's 9.6 percent national average.

His long-awaited speech seemed aimed at striking a balance between Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, who wanted the law applied promptly and in full, and millions of protesters who demand it be scrapped before any compromise could be discussed.

He said he would sign the law but there have misunderstood passed in decrees the presidential trial period to one from two years and require employers to give a reason for any dismissal.

Villepin pushed the law through parliament last month, arguing France must reform its rigid labor code quickly to fight youth unemployment. Students and workers reacted with the biggest protests seen here in years.

Jean-Claude Mailly, head of the Force Ouvrière union, called Chirac's proposals "incomprehensible and unacceptable." Bernard Thibault of the pro-communist CGT union said: "We want to the call for mobilization now more than ever."

"We were waiting for the president to listen to the message that young people and workers have been sending for more than two months and to withdraw the CPE first Job Contract," said Bruno Julliard, president of student body UNEF.

"And what does he tell us? He lays out the same arguments that we have heard for weeks. We are not more convinced this evening."

DGP Parliamentary caucus chairman Dominique Bussereau also said the speech contained no "The law has been largely adopted in constitutional and democratic elections and opposition just within the law. Villepin is or the protests are likely to continue."

In his speech, Chirac said he had hoped "the wisdom that young youths and their parents express," and wanted to respond. Reuters

Bush offers quake aid, but warns Iran on nuke bid

AFGHAN MAN An Afghan cries over the body of her son killed in an earthquake that devastated the village of Khakjigh-Ali, 100 kilometers west of Tehran, Iran, March 31. The quake left at least 70 people dead. AP

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States has offered aid to Iran after a devastating earthquake but also used the occasion to issue White's disputed nuclear program.

President George W. Bush made a point of offering sympathy and assistance while at a North Area tournament in Illinois Friday.

"We, as a people, have differences with the Iranian government but we do care about the suffering of Iranian people," he said.

The powerful earthquake struck western Iran, leaving at least 78 dead and 1,565 injured. The area of Bushehr was hit hardest. The earthquake left at least 40 people dead there and another 1,000 people injured.

The United Nations said Friday it was rushing a team of experts to ensure damage. Pittsburgh-based steelmaker US$1,000 in aid.

The state Department said the anniversary of Susie Schelar Bayat (employed Iran), authorized to the United Nations to call for mediation, a new direct contact between the two countries that has not been established for more than two decades.

Rice offered the condolences of the US government to the people of Iran, the government of Iran for the loss of lives and on behalf of the US government offered our assistance to the United States," state department deputy spokesperson Adam Ereli told reporters.

The aid would include blankets, plastic sheeting, hygiene kits, water units and temporary shelters for 100,000 people as well as 10 water purification units and 50,000 dollars for emergency medical organizations, Ereli said.

Iran's ambassador to the UN, Javad Zarif, indicated he would consult with his government before responding, the spokesperson said.

In 2003, the US government sent assistance when an even more lethal quake struck the southern Iranian town of Bam. Tehran refused an offer of aid last year after a similar earthquake.

The White House also issued a statement from Bush and his wife, Laura, about the quake. "Our thoughts and prayers are with families and individuals who have lost loved ones," they said.

But Bush also renewed US accusations of the Iranian government's nuclear program which Washington said its ultimate goal is to develop an arsenal.

The US leader reaffirmed Washington's view that if Iran "is to have a threat to world security" and urged Tehran to heed international warnings or risk further isolation.

"There is common agreement that the Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon, the knowledge as to how to make a nuclear weapon," Bush said.

"If they want to participate in the international order of things, if they don't want to isolate themselves, then you can't continue successfully to what we're seeing with unified voice," he said.

The United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany have been holding talks this week on what action to take if Iran ignores a UN Security Council demand last month that it suspend uranium enrichment by April 28. AFP

First Brazil astronaut enters ISS

MOSCOW—THREE ASTRONAUTS including the first Brazilian is now entered the International Space Station Saturday after their Soyuz vehicle docked with the ISS, according to images from the Russian control room.

The Soyuz TMA-8 carrying Brazilian Marco Pontes, Russian commander Pavel Vinogradov and US astronaut Jeffrey Williams docked automatically with the ISS at 0419 GMT, the station's mission spokesperson Valery Lindin said.

Pontes was the first of them to enter the ISS, after the door was opened at 0559 GMT, followed by Vinogradov and Williams.

Traditionally, it is the head of the crew who is the one Vinogradov, who makes first.

The Brazilian carried his country's flag and studied broadly in his joined American William Shepherd and Soviet's Valery Tokarev, who have been on the ISS since October 2005.

The crew were members blasted off from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Thursday.

Pontes, a 43-year-old Brazilian air force officer, remains in Earth orbit for 7 days, while Vinogradov and Williams are set to spend six months on the ISS, the only operation spanning since the dozens of Russia's 20th orbital in 2001.

They will prepare for the arrival of a US space shuttle carrying Canadian Steven Robinson, who will be the first European to make an extended stay on the ISS. AFP

Japan launches digital TV on cell phones

TOKYO—JAPAN ON SATURDAY began to launch digital television broadcasts to mobile telephones, in a highly anticipated service that could lead to a new galaxy of TV programmes.

Japan is a forerunner in the new technology popularly known as "One Seg," after "One Segment," although South Korea has offered the service since the end of last year.

Handsets have been on the market in Japan for several weeks that are equipped with the service, which can also broadcast programs, some laptop computers, high-end video game machines and other terminals.

The service will be free for now and programming will be the same as on home televisions as mobile operators examine whether One Seg will prove to be popular.

"On the short term, digital terrestrial broadcasting on mobiles will be the same programming as normal television will be of little interest to us," Hitaro Hakamata, CEO of Japan's top mobile operator NTT DoCoMo, said recently.

"But we are getting ready by preparing some specific content for the service that could come into use later when new channels are available," he said.

Mobile operators have lined up agreements with television networks to develop the service.

NTT DoCoMo has tied up with Nippon Television and Fuji Television, DoCoMo's main rival, KDDI, has forged a partnership with TV Asahi.

Subscribers will be able to switch up to nearly three hours of uninterrupted television with a normal cell phone battery, as opposed to about an hour for movies using broadcasts which require more power.

"On a technical level, the service functions well. The image is of good quality," said Pierre Bleuliven, a specialist at the consultancy IDEC, or the Japan International Technology and Strategy Experts.

But mobile operators risk losing out if subscribers turn to One Seg instead of pay-to-use Internet or third cell phones, unless the television service catches on as interactive features such as links to online information.

"Nobody knows for sure how to measure the value of interactive features," Shintaro said. AFP

Long mobile phone use raises brain tumor risk

STOCKHOLM—THE USE OF mobile phones over a long period of time can raise the risk of brain tumors, according to a Swedish study released on Friday, contradicting the conclusions of other researchers.

Last year, the Dutch Health Council, in an overview of research from around the world, found no evidence that radiation from mobile phones and TV towers was harmful.

A four-year British survey to Anxiety also showed no link between regular, long-term use of cell phones and the most common type of tumor. Reuters

Thailand set for vote amid opposition boycott

THAILAND running ahead of a general election on Sunday.

BANGKOK—THAILAND GOES TO the polls Sunday in an election called by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra as a referendum on his leadership, but an opposition boycott has reduced the vote to a sideshow race.

Some 45 million people are eligible to cast their votes in the polls which Thaksin called three years early in a bid to end weeks of mass street rallies set off by allegations that he abused his office for personal gain.

Polling stations are due to open at 8 a.m. and counting will start after the polls close seven hours later. Provisional results are expected to trickle in throughout Sunday night.

But questions have ceased to overshadow proceedings. For Thaksin is quit long after the last vote have been counted, angry over a controversial share deal that saw his family make $1.9 billion tax free.

In the absence of any opposition candidates, the biggest challenge to Thaksin in Sunday's vote is the "no vote" option that could be entered in Bangkok and the wealthy south, where anger has made the premier a vote.

Thaksin has pledged not to take office if he wins less than 50 percent of the vote, but his critics have called for voters to ask the election boycott a show of no confidence, saying that this could deny Thaksin his majority vote.

But Sirote Chowbuddhi, an associate professor in public administration at Bangkok's Mahidol University, downplayed the impact of the "no vote" option, saying Thaksin's support remained strong in the country's north and central.

Another analyst said few people were likely to exercise the "no vote" and that Thaksin's opponents would most likely just stay away from the polls.

"It makes it very go out and vote for no one," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, professor of political science at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

According to Sirote, a landslide victory would be the best way to end the political crisis, saying a marginal victory would further hurt Thaksin's premiership. AFP

US town mystified as wife charged in pastor's murder

HAPPILY photo of the Winkler family of Selmer, Texas.

By Woody Baird

SELMER, TENNESSEE—OF A church planted flowers Saturday in memory of their dead pastor, while deputies went to Alabama to pick up his wife, who earlier was said confessed to shooting him in their home.

The killing Wednesday in Selmer, a town of 9,000 people, baffled friends and fourth members who knew Matthew and Mary Winkler as a happy, loving couple.

Matthew Winkler was found dead in a bedroom at the couple's home after church members were looking for him when he did not appear for a service at the Fourth Street Church of Christ.

Mary Winkler, 32, was arrested on a first-degree murder charge. Friday in Alabama, where she drove with the couple's three daughters, authorities said.

On Saturday, authorities in Baldwin County, Alabama, transferred her to the custody of McNairy County sheriff's deputies who were expected to return her to Selmer later in the day, Baldwin County Sheriff's spokesperson John Woodry said.

In Selmer on Saturday, members of Matthew Winkler's congregation planted beds of pansies outside the church in his honor. The flower beds were part of a spring cleanup he had planned.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation agent John Mehr said police know why Winkler shot her husband, but he would not disclose the motive except to say police did not believe it was self-defense. He would not comment on whether Mary Winkler had accused her husband of abuse. Court papers offered no hint of a motive.

Matthew Winkler had preached at the Fourth Street Church for a little more than a year. His wife was a quiet, unassuming woman who was substitute teacher at an elementary school, church members said. They were married in 1996.

"Everything we saw before today indicated they had a very normal, carefree Asset Spotts said. "It just doesn't go together. Everything is stable, and we don't know what it is."

Authorities said that the wife, the daughters were at the home when the shooting occurred, and after and that investigators had found the weapon used to kill him.

At a juvenile custody hearing in Alabama on Friday, a judge placed the couple's daughters—Breanna, 7; Miah Alice, 6; and Patricia, 4—with paternal grandparents Jim and Dana Winkler, who live in Henderson, about 20 miles north of Selmer.

"It was important those kids were placed in a loving and nonhostile environment," said David Wharmon, a Baldwin County district attorney.

George Brush Police Jr. Rusty Pickett said the girls were "not mentally sharp, taught evidence" and that Mary Winkler was very concerned about their well-being. She attended the hearing, but did not speak to reporters. AP

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Ilarina

Thousands of students protest US immigration reform plans

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA—THOUSANDS OF mainly Hispanic high school students boycotted classes Friday and marched through the California city of San Diego to protest plans to criminalize illegal immigration.

PROTESTERS wave flags and cheer before marching through downtown San Diego, California March 31...At right, student Rachel Martinez, 15, displays she's been to attend a plea.

More than 1,000 pupils skipped classes in the southern city on the border with Mexico for a fifth consecutive day to protest pending US immigration reform legislation, school officials said.

"We are not criminals," proclaimed placards brandished by some of the demonstrators.

The students, many of them waving Mexican flags, marched in the city center demanding that plans to pass a law that could force the 11.5 million illegal immigrants residing in the United States to leave the country.

Police were closely watching the demonstrations that followed a week of protests across the United States against the reform bill that is pending debate in the US Senate.

On Monday, more than 36,000 pupils in Los Angeles joined tens of thousands of others across California, Texas and Nevada in staying walkouts from class to protest the proposed restrictions.

Some 500,000 people, mostly Latinos, last Saturday took part in one of the largest demonstrations in recent US history in Los Angeles in a spectacular display of Hispanic people power against the reform plans.

But the protests have largely died down since the beginning of the week.

However the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahony urged students Friday to stay in school instead of taking part in further walkouts amid speculation of a fresh outbreak of major demonstrations.

"These have been further reasons that a possible school boycott would be held on Friday March 31," Mahony said in a statement.

"As one who is deeply engaged in the overall efforts to have Congress pass just and humane immigration reform legislation, I am urging all students to the greatest [in Angeles area to stay in school]," he said.

The archbishop said that student boycotts did "not produce meaningful immigration reform" and in fact tended to polarize groups in the community and could backfire by building support for tougher legislation.

The US House of Representatives in December passed a bill that would make illegal entry in the United States a crime and heavily penalize employers of undocumented workers, igniting the biggest wave of protest in the Hispanic community.

AFP

Freed reporter assailed US under duress, says father

CARROLL

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS—Released US hostage Jill Carroll made a propaganda video criticizing US presence in Iraq as a condition for her release, her father told the Christian Science Monitor newspaper on Friday.

Carroll, 28, was seized in Baghdad on Jan. 7, and her translator was shot dead. The freelance reporter for the Monitor and other newspapers was freed on Thursday.

But even after her release video footage posted on an Islamist website showed her praising Iraq's insurgents, even perdicted their victory.

"I think the conjecture are very smart and even with all the technology and all the people that the American army has here, they still are better at learning how to live and work here, more often," Carroll said in response to a question.

Asked what she meant, Carroll said: "It makes very clear that the insurgents are the ones that will win in the end."

Carroll's father Jim told the Christian Science Monitor newspaper that his daughter was forced to make the video in order to be released.

Jill was "under her captor's control," Jim Carroll told the Monitor. He based his information on a long phone conversation with his daughter on Friday.

"She has been taught to fear the captors, Jim Carroll said. The captors had not only killed her translator, but said they had already killed another American hostage.

The reporter's father said the abduction "obviously started [sentence] propaganda value in the U.S. After listening to them for three months she already knew exactly what they wanted her to say, so she gave it to them with appropriate acting to make it look convincing."

In the video Carroll also said that her upcoming release "shows the difference between the insurgents and the Americans," it shows the insurgents are good people fighting an honorable fight while the Americans are here as an occupying force wreaking the people in a very bad way."

The newspaper earlier quoted that Carroll would be given every possible assistance to recover after her ordeal.

"We're deeply thankful for the concerted efforts that went on to agencies and officers of the United States government, with the government of Iraq and among individuals in Iraq and worldwide," the Boston-based newspaper's board said in a statement. AFP

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Sunday SPORTS

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Text or your hotshots: Anyone can be managed by messaging the SSPR Hotshots at 2910 (Globe/TM)

Rain or Shine dumps Hapee

SUNDAY TODAY: Alliance College Sports Center

2 p.m.—Barbecue vs Lemery Iowa

4 p.m.—Magnolia vs Shekinah

By Jeanice W. Poyo

FLAUNTING ITS LETHAL SORIA FROM CHOU to Smith, Rain or Shine whipped Hapee 97-72 early on to shake the PBL Unity Cup's sole dead possession of the Asia Student title.

The Elasto Painters cruised to their third straight victory behind Rookie Cabatu, who converted a game-high 20 points and eight rebounds.

Last conference's Most Valuable Player Asi Taulava and Gilbert Malabanan also teamed up for 23 points to keep the Painters ahead by double-figure for most of the game.

"The improvement of our big men, it's obvious that's our advantage," said Painters coach Leo Austria. "We also stopped Jason Castro in the first half. If we limit his production to 20 percent, I know it [would be] enough to score with reasonable depth."

Castro, who averaged 25 markers in the last two games, shot 14-of-36 (39 percent) in the second half to spur Hapee (0-2).

Mendiola will try to join Rain or Shine at 3-0 when it battles Magnolia at 4 p.m. today.

In the second game, Toyota (0)a can only enjoyed struggling Harbour Centre, 76-74, to improve to 2-1.

Another ailing powered the Spurks in the second match, scoring eight of his 16 points in the final period. Spurks watch Jason Ahn, though, wasn't exactly startled.

"It was an ugly win, we had 20 turnovers," said coach Ahn.

Hapee (0-2) slipped to 1-2, while Harbour Centre dropped to its third straight loss.

The scores

Rain or Shine 97

MBA 101 (MBA 74—J. Chan 0, Taulava 12, Malabanan 11, Ermark Reyes 6, Magsanoc 2, J. Yeban 2, Cadiz 2, Arboleda 2, Cabatu 20, Smith 8, Chou 5, Lanong 5, Quinahan 4, Lowrie 4, Arriola 2, Dela Cruz 0, Gabilang 2, Figueroa 2.

Hapee (0) 72—Castro 17, Jose 11, Ilustre 5, Reyes 4, Baloy 3, Bandal 3, Bonoan 2, Tumalip 2, Ulboro 0, Gonzales 0, Cuello 0, Rabeca 0, Lumbres 0.

Quarters: 20-12, 38-33, 80-52, 86-72

Toyota (0)a 76—Ahn 16, Reyes 10, Tenorio 9, Avelo 7, Baloy 7, Lyndon 6, Mendiola 4, Chu 2, Cuadrag 2, Dela Cruz 2, Sanchez 0, Lucas 0.

Quarters: 19-12, 35-32, 58-58, 76-74

HARBOUR Center's Bobbie Reyes (left) battles for a rebound against Toyota (0)a's Jojo Chenoweth.

photo by Rudy Santos

RP to host World pool in November

By Marong R. Castillo

THE WORLD POOL CHAMPIONSHIP WHICH Efren "Bata" Reyes won in 1999 and duplicated by Alex Pagulayan in 2004 will be hosted by the Philippines this year.

The 17th staging of the two-conference event at the sport will be played on Nov. 4-12 with a record total purse of $400,000 and the highest champion's purse ever at $100,000.

Only the venue has yet to be decided, according to Atty. Manny Mendiola, chair of the board of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines and operational of the BP'and no hitch one of the world's biggest sporting event here in years.

Mendiola added that the venue will be decided in the next couple of weeks when representatives from the organizing Mendiolas Games and ESPN arrive for inspection of the proposed competition sites.

The Philippine International Convention Center in Roxas Boulevard, the SM Mall of Asia along Diosdado Macapagal Highway and the World Trade Center in Ermita are three of the sites being considered.

The contract for staging the event, which will be run by an outfit headed by Mendiolas, is for three years. Taiwan hosted the event the last two years.

Part of the venue requirement is a space big enough to accommodate at least 16 tables aside from a stand that will accommodate spectators.

"These are the only things that are certain at the moment," Mendiolas told the Inquirer over the phone yesterday. "Everything is to go and the venue will be determined in the next two weeks."

A press conference to be hosted and managed by ESPN has been scheduled this Thursday at the Manila Hotel where Mendiolas will be joined by the Mendiolas representatives.

Ric Chiong that became the youngest ever winner of the event last year at 20 years old after rallying from 12-16 down to defeat Ian Po-Chang, 17-16, in the finals at Kaohsiung. His purse: $75,000 for the victory.

Wu succeeded Pagulayan, who joined the country's pool elite after his triumph in 2004. Pagulayan also won second in 2002.

Francisco "Django" Bustamante also came close to winning the event in 2002, placing second to Ian Mo-Lin of the US.

Reyes prevailed over Taiwan's Chang Kuo-Ping in the first of the straight staging of the event in Cardiff, Wales, in 1999.

Mendiolas said Manilaysers and ESPN will take care of putting up the total pot.

Other expenses for holding the event itself will be shouldered by the host organizing group. Mendiolas said details regarding this aspect will be announced later.

Tournament format will divide the 128-man starting field into 16 groups of eight players, who will play in a round robin under the alternate break system in the first four days.

Aida seals title clash with Lee

By Marc Anthony Reyes

AIDA of Japan returns the ball against Peng Hsien-yin of Taipei in the semifinals of the 17th Mitsubishi Lancer Junior Tennis Circuit at the Rizal Tennis Court. Aida won, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3.

Mamiit, Taino may reprise winning act

MAMIIT

TAINO

Federer versus Ljubicic in final

ROGER Federer easily advances after defeating David Ferrer in the semifinals.

IVAN Ljubicic of Croatia celebrates his victory over David Nalbandian.

Buncio, Saulog top Endurocross series

JOHN ALVAREZ. Rising star of karting.

Alvarez, Garcia power CRG's kart dominance

NO HINDRANCE TO TENNIS. Renzo Olpindo, a member of the RP paralympics team, practices inside JP Oliman's tennis court. Olpindo and his teammates hope that they can join the Malaysian Open this September. JOEY MENDOZA

Air21 scuttles SLR in Isabela

By Jane Manalo

NAGUILIAN, Isabela—Air21 wrapped up its elimination round campaign with a 97-83 victory over SLR Beer here at the Isabela Sports Complex.

The Express, which has already clinched a playoff berth, improved to 7-4 while the Boosters dropped to 5-6.

Mike Cortez led Air21 with 20 points, 11 rebounds and four assists while Jason Castro added 18 points and 10 rebounds.

Jeffrey Cariaso had 16 points and Jimmy Alapag 15 for the Express.

Air21 coach Tim Cone said he was pleased with the way his team played.

"We played well. We played hard. We played smart. We played unselfish. We played defense. We played offense. We played everything," Cone said.

Cone said he was also happy with the way his players shared the ball.

"We had 25 assists. That's a good sign. It means we're moving the ball around and we're getting good shots," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the three-point line.

"We held them to 6-of-20 from three-point range. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players rebounded.

"We had 45 rebounds. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the paint.

"We held them to 36 points in the paint. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the perimeter.

"We held them to 6-of-20 from three-point range. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the transition.

"We held them to 12 fast break points. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the second chance.

"We held them to 10 second chance points. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the bench.

"We held them to 20 bench points. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the starters.

"We held them to 63 starters points. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the overall.

"We held them to 97 points. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the final score.

"We held them to 97-83. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the win.

"We held them to win. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the victory.

"We held them to victory. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the game.

"We held them to game. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the match.

"We held them to match. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the contest.

"We held them to contest. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the competition.

"We held them to competition. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the opponent.

"We held them to opponent. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the team.

"We held them to team. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the coach.

"We held them to coach. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the fans.

"We held them to fans. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the media.

"We held them to media. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the public.

"We held them to public. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the world.

"We held them to world. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the universe.

"We held them to universe. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the galaxy.

"We held them to galaxy. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the solar system.

"We held them to solar system. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the moon.

"We held them to moon. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the sun.

"We held them to sun. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the stars.

"We held them to stars. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the planets.

"We held them to planets. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the galaxy.

"We held them to galaxy. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the universe.

"We held them to universe. That's a big factor in the game," he said.

Cone said he was also pleased with the way his players defended the world.

"We held them to world

Jenson pushes right buttons, takes Aussie GP pole

JENSON Button negotiates a turn. AP

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—Jenson Button kept his head during a hectic qualifying session that threw top a third of competitors home in earnest pole position for Sunday's Australian Grand Prix.

The Honda driver gained his third career pole position and first since last year's season-opener.

It was also the first pole for a full Honda team since 1966, although the Japanese motor company has shared many as an engine supplier.

But it wasn't easy.

"The stuff shaking with the environment, it was really difficult to stay calm," Button said. "It's just so windy out there with the conditions. It was very very windy."

Button said the Melbourne weather made qualifying chaotic. It was dry on Friday, cool and wet on Saturday morning, then cool and dry in the afternoon.

"Music. The whole day's been music with the weather," Button said.

The two red flags that stopped the sessions didn't help the situation, nor did the increased traffic on the track when the sessions resumed.

Then there were the regular problems with the cars.

"We really struggled with grip. So we finally got that pole position (today)," Button said.

Honda's Clemente Nadarella, who won two weeks ago in Malaysia, and Alonso, winner of the opening race in Bahrain, were second and third respectively.

Button's time was 1 minute, 25.320 seconds on the 5.3-kilometer (3.3-mile) Albert Park circuit. Nadarella's time was 1:25.610 with Alonso at 1:25.776.

Alonso, who qualified second-fastest at Sepang in the last two races, before finishing second and first, was content with third on the grid for Sunday.

McLaren-Mercedes drivers Kimi Raikkonen and Juan Pablo Montoya were fourth and fifth with Ralf Schumacher (ninth in a Toyota).

It was a bleak day for Ferrari.

Michael Schumacher, who was trying to break the current pole position record he shares with Ayrton Senna at 65, didn't make it to the final session. He was eliminated by being among the six slowest drivers of the second session and will start the race from 11th.

His time of 1:26.774 was just behind the last qualifier, Jarno Trulli of Toyota in 1:26.527. AP

Nets clinch playoff slot; Sixers, Suns club foes

ATLANTA—THE NEW JERSEY Nets edged the Atlanta Hawks, 91-88, on Friday to clinch a playoff spot with their 11th successive victory.

The Nets, who are on the third longest winning streak in franchise history, hold their opponents to under 90 points for the 20th time in the past 72 games and own their ninth straight road game.

New Jersey (40-28) beat the Philadelphia 76ers by 58 games with 11 left to play, leaving only one spot, that of the Atlantic Division title.

"The playoff runs of our recent passes of the streak," New Jersey's Jason Kidd said. "We weren't that much better than they were tonight. On defense we got some stops when we had to."

Atlanta led by as many as 11 points in the first quarter and kept the game close throughout, with the score tied 84-84 with less than a minute remaining in regulation time.

Vince Carter then tipped in his own rebound to put the Nets ahead by two with 42.0 seconds to play. Kidd then made four of six free throws in between in the dying seconds to guarantee the lead over the Hawks, who have lost five of their last six.

In Toronto, Lamond Murray scored 28 points as the Phoenix Suns beat the Raptors, 140-126.

In Orlando, Antawn Jamison scored 27 points as the Magic beat the Dallas Mavericks, 108-89.

In Charlotte, Andrew Bynum scored 24 points as the Chicago Bulls beat the Bobcats, 115-102.

In New York, Allan Iverson scored 45 points as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Knicks, 127-122.

Chris Webber added a season-high 34 points and 12 rebounds for the Sixers.

In Oklahoma City Mon Jackson scored 24 points as the New Orleans Hornets beat the Memphis Grizzlies, 107-102.

In Auburn Hills, Richard Hamilton and Tayshaun Prince each scored 25 points as the Detroit Pistons beat the Milwaukee Bucks, 112-105.

In Houston, Yao Ming scored 36 points and had 11 rebounds as the Rockets beat the Washington Wizards, 108-100.

In Denver Carmelo Anthony scored 32 points and the Nuggets overcame poor play in the first three quarters to beat Minnesota, 106-99.

In Los Angeles, Elton Brand and Sam Cassell scored 22 points apiece to lead the Clippers past Utah, 106-91.

In Seattle, Kobe Bryant scored 45 points and the Los Angeles Lakers used an impressive second half to beat the Sonics, 116-93.

Oakland, California, final Miller made four free throws in the final 9.9 seconds as Sacramento topped Golden State, 96-93. Reuters, AP

PHILADELPHIA star Chris Webber (right) shoots over New York big man Eddy Curry at the Madison Square Garden in New York. AP

REDICK

Redick named AP's best

JACKSONVILLE—JUSTICE, WESTIE 3-point-shooting kid Duke's Adam Redick, 3, ranking for most of the season, was selected the 'III college basketball player of the year by The Associated Press on Friday.

The guard was selected in The United States in scoring this season, topping his career as the nation. Coast Conference's 403-time leading scorer and Division I's most prolific 3-point shooter.

Redick is the record sixth Duke player to win the award, with five winners since 1991. The award was first presented in 1967.

Redick averaged 26.8 points this season, shooting 47 percent from the field, 42 percent from 3-point range and 88 percent from the free throw line. A 6-foot-6 senior on offense and an extremely intense player, he averaged 37.3 minutes for Duke, which finished the season 32-4 and ranked No. 4 in record.

Jay Williams is the 1st barrel a national championship season as North Carolina by leading an inexperienced team to a top 10 finish, was selected coach of the year. AP

Masters lore littered with memorable shots

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA—TIGER IAN stretch Augusta National beyond the seventy forty, or more who were disseminated, to Josh Dickinson once jokingly suggested. They can add a pond and remove a bunker, plant trees and cut them down.

But there is one thing about the Masters that doesn't change.

Somewhere along the way to a green jacket there is shot so incredible, so unforgettable, that it becomes part of the legacy of the Masters, a signature moment on a unique build for each decision.

Gene Sarazen put the Masters on the map with his "shot heard 'round the world," a 4-wood from 235 yards on the par-5 15th that went into the cup for a double eagle and earned Sarazen a playoff in 1935.

And then there's Tiger Woods.

His 2-iron from the second last year came with a 60-degree sand wedge from a much smaller distance, about 50 feet from behind the green to the hole, a shot that traveled easier than length by the time it climbed up the ridge to the par-3 16th, dropped like a rabbit and into stunning national reality, that made a close game, being welcomed the top.

It stopped on the lip two full seconds, and history pulled it into the hole.

"I was never thinking it had a chance," said Steve Williams, Woods' caddie who stood by his side, unwavering, hoping for one more turn. Woods stopped like the Dreamlock of Ease surrounding the green and millions watching on TV. "It was slowing down, and I said, 'I can't believe it's going to be close.' But I was wrong. It kept going. It was just amazing. You're just about to go forward and give whatever your emotion you're going to give, and there's more.

"And then, boom!"

Sarazen and Woods provided book and memories, 70 years apart, shots that define the magic of the Masters.

So telling what this year will bring, even as an Augusta National course that again has been strengthened by adding 155 yards on the back to club closed. Woods' tolerantly attempt to keep the course current with the times.

WOODS

Woods is the defending champion, joining Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer as the only players with at least four green jackets. He is remembered for the 12-turn-dip on the 16th green, but he is more proud of the 1-second on the 3rd hole, the 8-iron to 15 feet and the birdie putt to beat Chris DiMarco for playoff.

The Masters starts on Thursday without Nicklaus, who competed in Augusta National for the last time a year ago. Some say the longer anyone will make unpredictable a back-nine change such as the one Nicklaus delivered 30 years ago when he shot 30 to win his sixth Masters.

But there will be something repeated that other majors rarely offer.

Seems like there always is.

Larry Mize chipping in from 140 feet to clip the heart out of Greg Norman's Fred Couples' ball rolling back toward Ben's Creek on the 18th hole, stopped by a blades of grass. Nicklaus making a 40-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole, as Tom Weiskopf and Johnny Miller watched helplessly from the tee box.

"You can feel there is an aura oozing out of the ground," DiMarco said. "You remember Jack making that putt up the hill, and you remember Devin Gore Hill chipping up the hill. I try to forget Tiger chipping in."

Woods' miracle chip for birdie might embody what the Masters brings, but it also speaks to his own legacy as the dominant player of his time, on pace to be the greatest champion ever.

Woods retains hearing were the Masters and British Open, and finished second in the US Open and two to be fourth at the US PGA Championship. Woods already has more three times this year, including Dubai on the European tour.

And he remains a big favorite at Augusta National, perhaps more so than ever as the Masters because of the additional length and because none of the six players behind him in the world ranking has won this year.

Another measure of momentum like that chip adding to Woods' legend, players wonder what he'll do next. AP

Mickelson stretches BellSouth lead to six

DESTIN, FLORIDA—DEFENDING CHAMPion Phil Mickelson shot a 65 as he continued to stretch out his lead over Harrison Clark at Sugarloaf course at a record pace in the BellSouth Classic on Friday.

One day after matching the course record with a first-round 63, Mickelson was 7 under in the second round to set a tournament record for 36 holes at 36 under 128.

Mickelson said his emphasis was to carry some momentum the Masters next week. He said he isn't thinking about setting a US PGA scoring record.

"I think that the way that the course is environmentally getting easier difficult, I think that's unrealistic," Mickelson said, adding "What you're talking about is not in my mind, no."

The US PGA record for most strokes under par through four rounds on a par-72 course is 29 under by Jim Furyk at the 2003 Bob Hope Classic.

Mickelson is on pace to finish at 36 under 216. The US PGA record low total for 72 holes is 263 by Tommy Armour III at the 2002 Texas Open.

"I think as the moment, Phil is the only one really doing the fireworks," said Jose Maria Olazabal, who shot an 8-under 64 in the second round. "I think he's the one that really maybe has that record in his sight."

There was a long procession of low scores again on Friday when 79 players at par or better carried the cut.

Three chasing Mickelson, including Olazabal, spoke as if the tournament's defending champ was distancing himself from the field in Tiger-like fashion.

Davis with an impressive two-day total of 131, Olazabal still trails Mickelson by seven.

J.J. Henry matched Mickelson's 65 on Friday to move into second at 134—6 total that would have led in five of the previous nine years. Henry is six shots off Mickelson's total.

AP

Ochoa keeps 4-stroke Kraft cushion

RANCHO MIRAGE, CALIFORNIA—Lorena Ochoa went from flirting at flag to grinding over every shot on Saturday and still managed a four-shot lead after the second round of the Kraft Nabisco Championship but knows this is a major on Friday.

All that mattered was keeping her lead, and at 5 under 71 was enough to do that.

"It's amazing how many things were yesterday, and today I worked really hard for my 5 under," Ochoa said. "I was pleased with my round. I really like my position."

Coming off a 62 to tie the first round, which tied the fourth-lowest score in a major, Ochoa easily accomplished her par and passed regularly enough birdies to maintain her four-shot lead over 36-year-old Michelle Wie.

Ochoa was in 13 under 131.

Wie, playing in her first tournament in the nation, caught the brunt of the cool, gusty conditions and did well to shoot a 71.

She had a three-putt bogey on her fourth hole (No. 13), then held herself together with par-saving putts of 4 feet on the next two holes.

She didn't miss her first green until No. 6—her 53rd hole of the tournament—and scored par, then closely bunched consecutive on the eighth as she finished with three straight pars.

She will be in the final group with Ochoa, her first time in that spot since she won on the final threesome in the last round of the Kraft Nabisco in 2003 at age 13. Wie shot 76 that day and tied for ninth.

Karrie Webb, inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame last November, prevailed the squad by finding a 7-foot-down 152 yards for eagle on the 15th hole, stuffing another 7-foot putt 10 feet on the next hole and shooting a 66 to finish at 6-under 138, along with Sweet Anna Lee, who shot her second straight 69.

Paula Creamer needed miracles to remain again and shot 5 under 71, leaving her at 9 under 140.

Creamer sputtered again in the first season's major of the year, twice three-putting for bogey on her way to an even par 72 that left her 13 shots behind.

She won last year by eight shots at Mission Hills, just up the road from the Grand Slam, then set that as her primary goal for this season, but this wasn't the start she had in mind.

"I'm playing good enough, but it's just in bogeys," Creamer said.

Ochoa, who has never been more able to do anything than made Ochoa seem effort. The 29-year-old Mexican stepped to the first tee, she still had had four-shot lead over Wie and no one else was within six shots.

AP OCHOA: Looking good

From BI detention cell to hospital for Graham

By Jamaine M. Paya

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ) has taken a toll on his health.

Basketball Association of the Philippines secretary general Gerard "Jun" Lim was brought to the Metropolitan Hospital in Tondo, Manila, Friday night due to high blood pressure and chest pains.

"The diuretics said severe in one cause," said Lim, who is expected to remain in the hospital for further medical tests.

The Bureau of Immigration arrested Lim last March 20 based on an earlier ruling that the longtime BAP official is a citizen of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Lim remains in the custody of the BI at Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig, despite a temporary restraining order on his deportation.

The 49-year old Lim also has a pending case at the Court of Appeals (CA) in Manila.

"The CA asked Immigration last Wednesday to explain why a warrant of arrest was issued when I still have a pending case," said Lim. "They have until next week to explain."

Last Thursday Lim was reportedly scheduled for confinement after a medical checkup at the BI office in Intramuros, Manila, showed he had an irregular heartbeat.

But he was brought back later in the day to Camp Bagong Diwa, where he continued to issue statements supporting BAP's bid for readmission to the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Aside from the POC issue, BAP president Jony Lina has requested the world basketball federation (FIBA) on Friday in "set aside or annul" its Memorandum of Understanding with the POC regarding the formation of a new rogue body.

"Mr. Lina is continuing the fight," said Lim.

M. Lhuillier nips Mantawi

MANDALUYONG CITY — With M. Lhuillier, Jose Celso City Investors hosted the Mayoral Traders, 93-86, in overtime to grab the lead in the Visayas Division of the MS. Rowena Pedida Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) Mid-Conference at the city sports complex here.

Reggie Jones' guard Woodrow Enriquez bypassed with 24 points, tree it was ball-among Enrico Llamas who made the biggest impact in the Investors contest with 23 points.

Llamas finished with 20 points, including nine of the team's last 11 points in regulation and four in overtime that gave the Investors of tournament sportsmen. Michel Lhuillier the lift over the Traders.

With time winding down to the last 14.9 seconds and M. Lhuillier up at 86-78, Mantawi's Kim Cuh pierced the middle for a layup, but missed his attempt. Glenn Young grabbed the offensive rebound and passed the ball to Jacobs, who sank the equalizer, 86-all, with a second left, sending the game into overtime.

Sevilla opened the extra, but Llamas parked with a breakaway layup to give a final lead to Investors at 91-86. Mantawi lived, but that proved to be the Traders' last hurrah as Rikki Grabado and Llamas pounded over a starting 13-2 run to push M. Lhuillier ahead by eight, 92-84, with only 54 ticks left.

SPORTSWATCH

Bitoon wins Pichay tune-up tilt

TOP SEED International Master Richard Bitoon forged a quick draw against fellow IM Ronald Dableo in the sixth and final round to emerge champion in the Pinoy Prospers Pichay Jr. Invitational Tune-Up Games Saturday at the Synergasium Music Bar in Makati. Mabini, Manila. Bitoon and seventh seed IM Nick Mariano tallied 5½ points apiece, but Bitoon took the title after the tiebreak was applied. Pros. Dableo, IM Jayson Gonzales and Mariano finished 5 points each. Bitoon, Mariano and Dableo split the first and second cheques. Bitoon received P50,000 while Mariano got P30,000. The event was sponsored by newly elected PCCP president and Surigao del Sur representative Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. Bitoon received 6 points in finish in a tie for 3rd to 5th place with FM Oscar Dable of Mandaue City. IM Ronald Dableo finished in 6th overall with P10,000 for topping the women's class. *Bill Barker Recarido*

Amorsolo leads seven qualifiers

AMORSOLO Table Tennis Club out two others in the semifinals of the Lakas Table Tennis Tournament recently at the Green Pebble Table Tennis Center in Cubao, City. Rio Jason Amorsolo and Jeffrey Pacheco were all-square in the 11-9 open round robin to emerge heavy favorite to take the event at the club established as one of the country's best players. Leading Amorsolo's charge are Beverly Giles the country's No. 7 lady player and national age group champion Michael and Aimee Pacheco. Philippine College High School. Its new base collected by Amorsolo, also made it to the semi-finals at 10-9 over Jeffrey Pacheco via Patricia Pacheco via Amorsolo. Other quarterfinals: FOXY 10th-43rd. Chua is supported by Amorsolo despite lack of serious Filipino-Chinese Amateur Athletic Association Table Tennis Tournaments. Marcelo gained the final slot on the semifinals with an 8-11 win over Lakas, while Junior (9-8) and Crown Paddle (9-8) are solid in the hunt for the fourth and final semi-finals slot.

Beach volleyball on Golf Power

GOLF Power Plus Industries Inc. (Harrison the first set of the championship match between Adamson University Team 1 and College of St. Benilde Team 1 in the 1st Samsung Talisman's Inter-Collegiate Beach Volleyball Challenge at the Canlubang Sports Center in Laguna. Sky Golf Power Plus is aired at 5 p.m., Sundays on GMA-7. Actress Agot Isidro, Sky Golf Power Plus General Manager Ricky Cardenas and Samsung Executive Marketing Manager Ms. Evelyn Ong are supporting the Samsung Beach Volleyball Challenge. Adamson defeated CSB, 25-23, 25-23 to win the championship. Adamson defeated CSB, 25-23, 25-23 to win the championship. The Adamson Falcons 8-rounders between Mike Tandoga and Benny Peloso of CSB. Ian and Elmer Ramos and Ernesto Tornadizo at 1:12 p.m.

Sports Kali Eskrima at Orchidarium

SPORTS KALI Eskrima's games — The Dumaguete City Authority Pardayo will host basketball exhibition games from April 12 to May 12. Martial Art experts And Former and Open Exhibition of the Sports Kali Eskrima, Inc. will host sessions Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7-9 p.m. Registration is on at the Orchidarium and Butterfly Pavilion office (035) 422-7272 at the Teodoro Valencia Circle in Rizal Park.

Big showdown at SJC April 5

VISAYAS and Mindanao cockers will square off with their Metro Manila counterparts on the LCC Arena in Ayala Alabang on Wednesday April 5, at the San Juan Coliseum. Sponsor is Dagupan Complexon (SSC) Hotel. Sec. Ito at Davao until court Cup at Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) team hosted 10 participants in this showdown of calling tournaments, featuring the participants are Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, Sec. Lito Lapid to Rep. Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) team hosted 10 participants in this showdown of calling tournaments, featuring the participants are Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, Sec. Lito Lapid to Rep. Constantino Chuidian, Mayor Joel Duterte, Rodolfo Valdez, Mayor Antonio Sahod of Cebu, Sen. Rudolf Pidlaoy of Siargao, Philadelfos Brothers of Zamboanga, Cirilo Tomas of Iloilo, and Reno Rodriguez of Negros. Residential Rodeo Manila will be hosted by Sabong Idol Patrick Antonio, Jun Tenorio, Gov. Sly Nograles, Pac de Guzman, NCA World Championship winner Ed Pineda, the Bolipata Brothers Dr. Harry Ramos, Jet Fernandez and Jaggy Ice Brothers.

Alienation

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE PHRASE SAY JOEY LINA WALKED OUT of the stakeholders meeting because Jose tolerated the renaming of the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) into Philippine Basketball.

It was, Lina what is a name?

A rose by any other name still smells sweet.

A president arousing by fraud still reigns like a real queen.

A peso counting one peso or a million bucks still qualifies, either way, as a thief.

But if only for the sake of argument, the name BAP can't be used anymore for reasons of dignity and propriety.

If I may remind Joey, the name BAP has been used without effect if not itself expelled last year by the Philippine Olympic Committee's general assembly for various offenses against the Olympic movement. To have it resurrected would be an insult to the intelligence of the 10 or so NOA presidents who had voted for the expulsion.

You don't resurrect a dead horse when discussing new directions unless you want retrogression instead of progression.

Why Joey Lina can't look, refuse to see, "through a glass clearly" up to now, only God knows and He's not telling.

If they use Joey Lina to save a effort because he was one of the stakeholders tasked by the NOC to restore order in basketball, I say, only shake my head. Look, fact be not withheld or from the Mountain of the Stars to the Sea, we might well be on the verge of getting readmitted into the good graces of the World Basketball Federation (FIBA) with the present BAP officialdom in charge of basketball in the country.

Puerile, indeed! Four run the POC and the stakeholders still recognize the BAP where it has been expelled from the POC ergo we cannot but pray for?

Now, the MOU required a concession and not a majority decision in resolving a dispute.

How can there be a consensus when Joey walked out of the summit? When the time to resume stakeholders' pow-wow Filipinos love football, that was it. What the vote of all four not consensus enough?

Now, Filipinas Basketball, was formed with only four major stakeholders based in Metro Manila instead of "a balanced and country-wide representation from all levels of the sport."

Oh, well, all four—PBL, PBL, UAAP and NCAA—truly represents not only the whole spectrum of the basketball nation but even Asia and the world as well. Why, because it is from these stakeholders that we pluck out the best players of the land to battle for honors even in and year out for the country abroad. With these four associations, what more can one ask for? Of course, since we recognize FIBA blessings, the merging of all basketball stakeholders under the NOC of Tan Boonliat will be forthcoming and a mere formality.

I pray that Joey Lina sees the light—soon as. He's a good man. Take it from me, his compadre. I'd hate to see him ensnared the web of bicolor.

That's only how see.

* * *

Comments to mendoza@philstar.net

Kimoni Academy listing starts April 16

RAPING MADE ITS PRESENCE FELT IN the local badminton industry. Kimoni Philippines launches its network further with the launching of the Kimoni Badminton Academy designed to improve the skills of 11 game players.

Kimoni Philippines Chief Executive Officer Billy Lim-it, the main force behind the rise of the Kimoni brand, said that the early start of registration for the academy on April 6 will give them the chance to evaluate participants and get them acquainted with the program.

The academy, according to Lim-it, offers structured badminton training sessions and under a competent coaching staff led by Marvin Antonio, former coach of the Philippine team who will serve as the team's trainer.

The training venue is inside the Kimoni building at 39 Ringa Street, Sta Mesa Heights, Quezon City.

The school offers training sessions for the amount of P1,000 each to beginner, intermediate or advanced level. Each trainee will get 12 training sessions with free shirt, four sets of Kimoni court and shuttlecocks and will be awarded with a Kimoni Badminton Academy Certificate after the training's completion.

Registrants can be screened through Luigi Jo, Kimoni Philippines' Director, at 414-5261.

Meanwhile, Davao City made a record-breaking recovery when close to 400 badminton aficionados joined the third leg of the Kimoni Badminton Tour 2006 held at Ateneo Badminton Court recently.

Brown teams from the cities of Tacurong, Davao, General Santos, Bukidnon, Cagayan De Oro, Tagum and Kidapawan displayed the owners' various levels with competitions on doubles for men's, ladies', mixed', seniors' 30-39 years and juniors' 15 years and under. Winners of each level and category advance to the finals of the Championships that will be held in Market! Market on July 22 and 23, with more than a million pesos in cash and Kimoni products at stakes.

Nikka Isidro, a member of Kimoni Philippines' board of directors, said that Kimoni Badminton Tour 2006' tour stop will be at Tacloban Intrinsic Badminton Club at Tacloban City on April 8 and 9.

DOCTOR BACKS BOWLERS: The national bowlers will be rooting Doctor shoes in tournaments. From left are Jovenes Gotchalian, Chester King, Ryman Dogasano, CJ Suarez, Mikey Rivera and Norberto Tan.

Sunday SPORTS
Editor: Teddyboy S. Malasaloc

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Atienza backs RP Open softball

PHILIPPINE SOFTBALL GOT A BIG boost yesterday when Manila Mayor Lito Atienza pledged the city government's full support behind the revival of the National Open Men's and Women's Championships.

Filomeno "Boy" Godinez, executive vice president of the Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines (Asaphil), said the Open, as meet-balls the last four years, will stage a grand comeback next month with the country's premiere city as host.

"We deeply thank Mayor Atienza for his genuine concern for the sport, which I know has always been close to his heart," said Godinez. "I still remember the days during my younger years when Mayor Atienza played softball and always hit at the Rizal Memorial softball field."

The revival of the event was proposed by Godinez and supported by four of nine active members of the Asaphil board in a bid to improve the performance of the Philippine Blu Boys and Girls which according to Godinez have been declining.

Asaphil vice president for Luzon Antonio del Rosario, VP for Western Visayas Ding Jimenez, director for Mindanao Joaquin "Boy" Sarabia, and director for Central Visayas Marino Sanchez also acknowledged Atienza's support.

In last year's Southeast Asian Games, the Blu Boys also suffered a rare loss to Indonesia before recovering to win the title. The Blu Girls also dropped a match to Thailand in the biennial event after dominating the sport for 17 years.

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MY Games inaugural rites today

FG, PSC chief invited

THE MANILA YOUTH Games (MYG) unfurl today at 5 p.m. in colorful and festive opening rites at the Rizal Memorial Track Stadium.

The usual parade of athletes and dance demonstrations will be spiced up with a shooting competition, acrobatic show, taekwondo drills and a fireworks display to usher in the week-long multi-sports competition featuring the city's best under-21 athletes.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza leads a host of city hall luminaries and representatives from the city's 897 barangays and 120 private and public schools in opening the event. Invited to grace the opening were First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo, Games and Amusements Board (GAB) chief Eric Buhain and Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chair Willibaldo Narvasa.

Over 10,000 athletes and an estimated 15,000-strong audience will converge at the Rizal oval.

Atienza will also honor Manila's sports greats led by legendary coach Virgilio "Delfy" Dalupan and Edmundo Ilarbeza.

The MY Games, organized by the Manila Sports Council (Manspo) under chair Arnold "Ali" Atienza, will cover an 8-day qualifying event for members of Team Manila vs the 2nd MY Games National Invitational tilt October.

ATIENZA

The event is partnered by Converse with support from the PSC, Pagcor, San Miguel Corp., Super Hemy Mercantile Resources, Globe Telecom, Mbl, MVP, Inc., Goldpoint, and Concept Manila-Audiovisual.

The invitational will pit the finest athletes from the capital city against their counterparts from other local government units nationwide.

Asian 9-ball Tour qualifying slated

THE QUALIFYING ROUND FOR the Enervo International Asian 9-ball Tour Ladies Championship gets underway on April 24-25 at Pareng's (Skyhood in Robinson's Galleria, Mandaluyong City).

Gamers does are say he gratis in the event organized by GP billiards patron Arturo "Pearl" Pacheco and sanctioned by the Asian Confederation of Billiards Sports and the Billiard and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP).

Among the local seeded players are 2005 SEA Games double gold winner Rubilen "Bingbing" Amit and fellow national team members Iris Ranola, Mary Ann Basas and Johanna Dee.

The event will be aired live on Solar Sports.

The main draw will include the top female players from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan.

AMIT Source

Some of the Asian superstars expected to join are reigning back-to-back world champion Ga Young Han of Korea, Zhou Mengyang of China and Akiko Sujihara of Japan. For details, call 890-9940. Marlon Bernardino

Tour de Vera April 7

THE ANNUAL BANGBANG, Bengalenan Sikulan dubbed Tour de Vera will be held on April 7.

A total of P15,000 in cash prizes, trophies and medals will be at stake.

The race will traverse the streets of the chief district of Bacolod City with a total distance of 150km.

The event was organized by Bacolodnon Lovable Sirra Inc. in conjunction with the celebration of the Dayawdaw town fiesta. It's exclusively for amateur cyclists with a maximum of 80 participants.

ENTERTAINMENT

Celso Ernesto G. Velarde

FAP starts screening for Luna Awards

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

IN PREPARATION FOR ITS ANNUAL LUNA Awards in May, the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) has begun screening the short-listed films prior to the final selection of nominees.

FAP executive secretary Atty Ivanro explained that nominators were narrowing down the number of semifinalists and that the final list would soon be submitted to the general membership for voting.

The nominators include directors Eduo Ad. Castillo, Elwood Perez and Mel Chionglo; screenwriters Ludivi Ramirez and Joe Gamorot; cinematogra-phers Shaiyr Cheneme and Eduardo Cabaltes; editors Edgardo Vinarao and Ben Utab; production designers Manny Morfe and Edgar Martin Librando; musicians Willy Cruz and John Lenaris; and sound men Jose Climaco and Rolly Sinta.

Director general Leo Martinez told Inquirer Entertainment, "The short works will be trimmed down to five finalists in 12 categories by the end of April."

Typecasters

Among the short works are both documentaries and independent digital films.

Typecasters are numerous, ranging from Angel and Gual Bernal's "Blue Moon," with 16 citations (nine for performances), four for Jeffrey "Jamsin Ko Mo," 12, and "Ordal," 11; Ginaw's "Batch," 10; and Regal's "Ako Legal Wife," 10.

The four digital films that received citations are sub-platoon' Ang Pagbabalik ni Mang Pandoy Cole" and Pepe Ir. Villaluz and Ellen Ramos' "Bonsai."

These four digital films were shot on mini-DV and blown up to 35mm film for theatrical release.

Actors in the digital movies stand out on the short list: Nathan Lopez for Best Actor, JR Valentin and Meg Medina for Best Supporting Actress ("Manalasa"); Gino Martin for Best Actor and Julyn Ann for Best Actress ("Hinahanap"); Primo Adlawan for Best Actress and Ricky Gomez for Best Actor ("Mga Pusang Gala"); and Joyce Huber for Best Actress ("Bayaw").

Actress Solen ("Manalasa") is being considered for Best Director, along with Axel Lorenzana ("Ako Legal Wife" and "Blue Moon"), Dodo Lazaro ("Nanam Ka Man"), Ish Mani ("Hawkie"), Mark Molly ("La Vida Loca"), Rory Quintos ("Dolsa"), Jose Javier Reyes ("Kanda"), Tony Reyes ("Enemy

FAP, A14

EDDIE Garcia, Dennis Trillo and Christopher de Leon in "Blue Moon," with 16 citations

SHARON Stone joins the fanfare.

Boring, laughable in spite of all that sex

REVIEW

IF NOTHING ELSE, "BASIC INSTINCT 2" may validly Sharon Stone's title as contemporary queen of high-end trash.

Often hardly laughable in its actions, dialogue and badly-pasted visual imagery, the belated sequel to the 1992 guilty pleasure Ooh Lunched Stone's career in brain spasms as response to ballsier, sex-encouraging fifty and other technical leapings.

"Basic Instinct 2" feels like the sequel with fatally low sense sauce artfully accompanied by hurried non-pertness and a pretty patchy finish, both of upon down like ground chuck left festering in the road sauce under the sun a few days.

If Stone looked anything less than hot, which she does, "Basic Instinct 2" would be sad to watch as tawdry, because it's always sad when some

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SHARON STONE
BASIC INSTINCT 2

DANTES and Calzado in a

'Mome a brave from 'k

REVIEW

Dahil mga 13,385 linya ang kakantahin mo.

Kahit sa hirap, masarap.

CUP NOODLES
Sotanghon Seafood

PASIONG MAHAL

NISSIN

Ngayong Semana Santa, mag-seafood na. Handog ng Nissin.

Festive frozen delight

REVIEW

By Oliver M. Palomado
Contributor

THE SEQUEL TO 2012'S MODERately entertaining animated hit "Ice Age" revisits familiar territory and further explores its gregarious but likable characters. As with the first one, "Ice Age 5: The Meltdown" sticks with kids through well-timed use of physical comedy, but even adults can now get a kick out of some weighted, more mature elements in the dialogue. The plot may be simple, but it's reasonably a rainbows bibs.

The unlikely friendship between digitally rendered animal misfits Manny the mammoth (voiced by Ray Romano), Sid the sloth (John Leguizamo), and Diego the saber-toothed tiger (Denis Leary) is too emphasized, but still prominently drawn. The trio's angst and insecurities take center stage as they try to escape an impending catastrophe flood. They join the exodus of beasts that leave the plains for safer ground, confident that they can reach a temporary haven in no time. That's easier said than done. The friends get sidetracked by different threats and manipulations along the way.

"Meltdown" is aesthetically luscious in predecessor. There are more colors, as the recently melting ice monuments shows a bigger glimpse of this world as it was. The character designs are also more detailed and imaginative, resulting in a more textured and more tangible environment. Details of wind, fire, and water, as well as the movements of the animal characters, old and new.

That's why this endeavor can win the grown-ups over. Children might wrestle their heads while trying to figure out why the female mammoth Ellie (Queen Latifah) got angry with Manny. The male mammoth suggested, innocently, that he and his lady friend may need to repopulate their near-extinct species.

And despite lacking the voice features showcased in the form of a human child Ellie in the previous installments), the movie has very recognizable heroes that kids can bond with and identify with. Among them is the squirrel-like creature Scrat (Chris Wedge). He's once-cool critics.

SID, Manny and Diego are back with more angst.

are many where the lovers arrow starts.

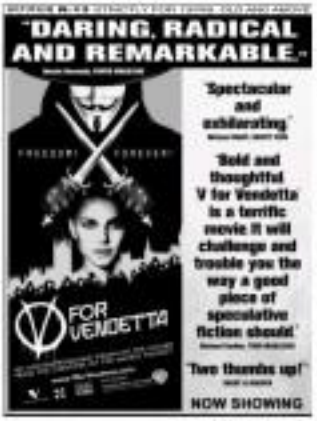
ents of Love'
e departure
kilig' movies

ad Daza

Ngayong Semana Santa, mag-seafood na.
Handog ng Nissin.

NISSIN

FAP starts screening for Luna Awards



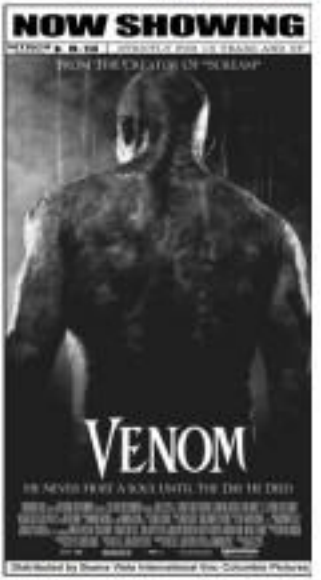
From page A3 ›

Actress Jo, and Jeanine Jagara ("Shikimole der Movie").

Pogue Gallego's "Pinoy Blonde"...premiered by United, shot with 1-HD digital camera and transferred to film...has four timelines. Another United release, "La Vita Loca," has six.

Also cited are the mainstream movies "Malamig" scene, "Kaidos" scene, "Kubra ni Lola" and "Superkids," "Bona," "Kissing Kalsada," "Ina, Let the Love Begin," "Ina."

PARTNERS Lopez up for Best Actor.



APRIL 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Fireworks at EK!
2	3	4 Rio Grande	5	6 Swan Lake	7 Clown Jugglers	8 Kart Trak
9 Wheel of Fate	10 Roller Skate	11 Safari Shootout	12 Rialto	13 Holy Thursday	14 Good Friday	15 Fireworks at EK!
16 Egg Hunt	17 Hoop Shot	18 Paintball	19 Bump 'n Splash	20 Carousel	21 Jungle Outpost	22 Exodus Ride
23 Fireworks at EK!	24 Anchor's Away	25	26 4D Ride	27 Magic Shop	28 Rio Grande	29 Space Shuttle

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ENTERTAINMENT

Rex Smith reveals strong RP ties

By Marinel R. Cruz

I'M SURPRISED THAT NOT everyone knows I've worked with Filipino musicians and, in fact, recorded my latest album here in Manila. The cover picture was shot on a local studio, imo."

Singer-actor Rex Smith, who popularized the romantic pop song from the 1970s, "Simply Irresistible," was talking about his current CD "Simply ...Rex." The album, under MCA-Universal Records, has not been released in Asia.

"I love the people here. I appreciate the fact that I could just come over and immediately converse with all of you," said Smith during a gathering on Friday at the Glorio Jeans Coffeee in Makati City.

Smith said he last been to the Philippines three times. His last visit was in 2000 when he recorded "Simply ... Rex."

Last night, he performed at the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City. Tonight, Smith **will be at the Hard Rock Café in Makati** City.

"My son Brandon, 30, has come with me on this trip. He loves it here. He's been to Boracay. Now, he's off to Greenhills Mall to **get some pearls,"** Smith added, smiling.

The singer-actor said plans of returning here yet again and touring the rest of **Asia are already in the works. "I want to** introduce to the people here some of my **Broadway roots. I've been part of the the**ater industry for 25 years now. People **here may not be aware of it, but the main** thrust of my career has long been in theater."

Smith made his Broadway debut as Danny Zuko in "Grease!" He played Fred Graver in "The Pirates of Penzance" and starred in its film adaptation. He was also in "The Human Comedy," "Grand Hotel," "The Scarlet Pimpernel" and "Annie Get Your Gun."

Smith also starred in Lincoln Center's "Anything Goes," The Kennedy Center's "West Side Story," and the Canadian production of Sunset Boulevard." He teamed with the production of "Joseph..." "Jesus Christ Superstar," "Godspell" and "They're Playing Our Song."

How much of the songs in your 16-track album did you write yourself?

"Three: Rose," "Jessie Will You Love Me?," "Run with the Angels," "Don't

MORE A13

LISA cordero/star friend Paris, Hotel

Early favorite leaves 'Idol'

By Kathryn L. Reyes

"I'M ONLY 16. THIS CAN'T BE THE END OF the road for me. It's just the beginning."

And so, gracefully, Lisa Thelen, an early judges' favorite this season, left "American Idol" this week.

She had sung first "Idol" Kelly Clarkson's "Because of You" on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila).

Judge Simon Cowell dressed the song too big for her voice.

In an exclusive interview with Inquirer Entertainment a day after she was booted, Lisa told she had watched the replay of her performance and was quite satisfied with it. "I honestly don't think anything went wrong."

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Were you surprised to land in the bottom three for this? How does this work?

Not at all. I was prepared for anything. I wasn't any more surprised than I was the first time.

Why did you choose that song?

I also considered singing an Alicia Keys. But I just wanted to sing a mid "ballad" song.

What did you say to Paris Bennett, who was reduced to tears by the results?

We're roommates; we're really close. I just reminded her of the time, when we're together again, CMJ? "Top 10 go on a US tour after every season.)

No rivalry at all between you and Paris?

None whatsoever. All the roommates were all like brothers and sisters.

Simon earlier said you were the best 16-year-old they ever had. Did you feel any pressure?

I'm a very optimistic person; I didn't feel the pressure! Don't it never so much to me knowing that Simon said that.

Do the contestants coconsult each other on which song is best for whom?

No, we do.

Marathon is nicknamed "Marathon," Kevin was "Chicken Little." Would it have helped if you had a nickname, too, for the extra entertainer?

No, definitely. I might have wanted to be nicknamed "Mighty Jack."

Now that you are out of the competition, who will you rote for and why?

I am not picking up that phone because it's really laughs-in-house.

What is the best and the worst part about being on "American Idol"?

The best part is just being able to perform. On the downside, it kind of takes you away from ... it interrupts your life but it is well worth the interruption.

("American Idol" goes on four Wed Wednesdays and Thursdays... 8 p.m. direct via satellite, 8 p.m. replays, 11:30 p.m. primetime, ABC 5 also broadcasts on the same days at 10 p.m.)

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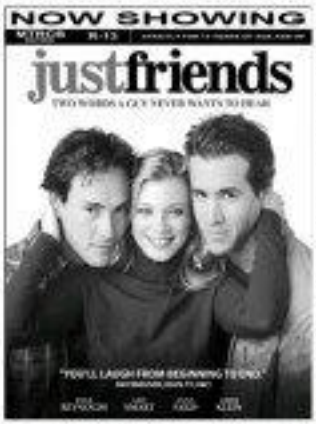

Mon David does t

POWER POSING CHAMP BEHIND

Pampanga state house after winning big in the United States, he was hosted like a national hero.

Now that Mon David has flown to Brazil 11 hour London after topping the international jamboree recently held there, he will be similarly feted and thanked for putting the Philippines on the world map in the festival music?

What do you think?

We hope that government and entertainment executives do plan a big homecoming for Mon, because we'd like to believe that, in their estimation, the arts are as important to the country as sports.

What do you think?

Can anyone tell Mon, being trained as by conduct as he parade makes in cities saying Ayala Avenue, thousands of people's classic singing in his ears?

Mon, being given a reception at Malacañang Palace, after which a ballroom full of top government officials enjoy a jazz concert featuring him and the country's best performing artists?

What do you think?

Then, Mon becomes the special guest on a host of TV shows, with

Rex Smith re

Mon Nothing at All and
Love Story," which is a live re
ing of my performance
Carnegie Hall. "Jessie, Will
Love Me?" is a sequel to "
Jessie."

We you aware that your
"Simply Jessie" is still
played on local radio?

Yes, I appreciate that.

Since 1994, producer
Smith's concerts) said I'm st
the youngest artists in her
have. You see, I'm 50. I'm not
young, but I guess it's my you
approach in life that make
look young. That's the gen
Most a month ago, I rather
decide to have a filling exp
he wouldn't believe me wh

he Philippines proud

Ahorle is as talented and as good a person as her mom and dad.

Performance awards are great, but the best "trophies" are the children who do us proud by turning out to be good and giving human beings.

We're sure Mon and Inno agree.

Finally, Mito deserves special praise for winning his international award when he's already a publicity boy. Success may take its time coming to the deserving, but it comes.

We trust that Mon's strolling example will inspire the many mature people out there who have been waiting for recognition to come their way.

Don't lose heart. Fame never could be last around the corner.

Movies on TV

TODAY on Cinemax, 7:35 p.m., "The Adventures of Brisco County Jr. Tomorrow 3 at 8:25 a.m., "Reality Bites" 9:45 p.m., "The Great Race." April 4 at 6 a.m., "Born Yesterday" 4:55 p.m., "Silent Fury."

Today on HBO, 11:15 a.m., "Satyra" 4:30 p.m., "Monroe on the Horizon." 8 p.m., "Back to the Future, 3." April 3 at 11:10 a.m., starring as HBOSignature at 8 p.m. on April 10. The three stars (James Gandolfini, Lorraine Bracco, Edie Falco, Michael Imperioli and Steve Buscemi, and presents us in-dids look at the family life of a mod-ern-day Mafia boss.

Description will be screened every night until the 13 episode are run ends, and there will be a week-end marathon on April 22 and 23 starting 1 p.m., also on HBO Signature "Lucy Show."

TLC "SPECTACULAR cat-tests—come to life." "Lucy Tests," premiered on Wednesday. Its mouth, delivering action, naturally and a fresh blast of youthful energy filmed at preschoolers, the show is more as optimistic 4-year-old named Stephanie, who wants to live in Lucy Town and meets a cast of people, including the world's latest super-villain, Bubba Bumar.

Fortunately, Lucy Town is under the watchful eye of Spartacus, a super-fit hero who helps the town people handle Bubba's schemes.

RON DAVID

"Out of Africa," 12:10 a.m., "Starving Pirates." April 4 at 4:15 p.m., "Catch-22." 8:35 p.m., "Silent Hunt."

On CNN

"CNN Connects: The Price of Progress" airs tonight at 10 and April 5 at 10 p.m. "Talk Asia" is relerun today at 7:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. and tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. "CNN Today" airs M-F, April 3-7, at 7 and 10:30 a.m.

'The Sopranos'

THE FIRST season of the Emmy award-winning series, "The Sopranos," will start tele-

veals strong RP ties

From page A2-1

...ckl him my age. And you'd think that a dentist would know more than anybody how old you are.

I also will have that to my friend-ship work. It has kept me in shape.

His part: Cow cadet. American ballet and part Cherokee. I think the native blood in me gives me longevity. I really believe that.

What makes the Philippines special to you?

My father was a naval aviator during the World War II and he was in the battle in Leyte Gulf. Being here reminds me that I am proud product of why those men and women in World War II gave their lives for the freedom I'm enjoying right now. And it boiled to happiness gone another way. I wouldn't be here. The song "From Here to Eternity" is a tribute to my forefathers.

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Upgraded price

GLORIA LEE IS THE BIG BOSS OF GLOBE Asiatique Realty Holding Corporation who donated the house next to Nene Tamayo on the first edition of "Pinoy Big Brother."

Tamayo was supposed to get a house worth

P1 million, but guess what? She was instead given P2.5 million house, fully furnished.

Lee had everything to do with it. "We liked Nene," he said. "She's a very nice person. So I decided to give her a bigger house in St. Monique Talisay [subdivision, in Binangonan, Rizal]. The homeowners love her."

Globe Asiatique is also donating a house and lot to the winner of "PBB Celebrity Edition."

Paolo & Suzy's 3rd

THE THIRD DAUGHTER OF PAOLO ABRERA and Suzy Entrata was born on Monday, March 27. The miracle parents announced they were naming her Maria Antonella. She weighed 7 in the pounds, 11 ounces. "Small but so cute!"

PHOTO: Antonella Abrera's

busy dad said.

Viva films in the US

SUNSTAR COMMUNICATIONS Corporation has announced that its unit Network satellite television is now offering a new Filipino programming package called Viva Pinoy Pack. The package includes Viva TV, SBN America and SPN USA.

Viva Pinoy programming is a mix of Filipino-language channels that provides movies, news, sports and lifestyle programs. Viva TV provides access to the most recent and top-rated movies from the Philippines. SBN America offers nationwide news programming along with local sports, while SPN USA is a general entertainment and lifestyle channel that offers Filipino movies, news, cooking, travel and fashion programs.

"Viva TV will entertain the entire Filipino American family with a mix of everything that captures the heart of the Philippines," said Vicente Del Rosario, chair of Viva Entertainment Inc.

On top of Viva TV, SPN America and SPN USA, Dish Network also carries the Mabuhay Channel, plus 133 international channels to more than 20 languages.

The Viva Pinoy Pack costs from $11.99 to $15.99 per month, for details, visit www.dishnetwork.com or call 1-866-276-2574 (DISH (3474)).

PHOTO: LeBlanc with Phoebe

Friends

LOS ANGELES—Matt LeBlanc has filed for divorce from his wife, citing irreconcilable differences, but his publicist says the two remain "friends."

The former "Friends" TV star filed papers in Superior Court on Thursday to dissolve his three-year marriage to Melissa LeBlanc, according to documents obtained by Entertainment Tonight. The couple separated Jan. 1.

"The dissolution is amicable," LeBlanc's publicist, Jen Lilienstein, said Thursday.

The pair married in a celebrity-studded wedding in Hawaii in 2003. AP

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HOT TRIO on the dancefloor: Derek Banas (right) with Elijah Kelley (left) and Jenna Dewan.

Banderas all praise for Fil-Am co-star

LOS ANGELES—ANTONIO BANDERAS IS all praise for Jason Dunn, his fil-am co-star in the movie "Take the Lead."

Dunn plays one of the high school students who locate ballroom dancing from Antonio's character. "Take the Lead" is based on the inspiring true story of a professional dancer, Pierre Dulaine, who volunteered to teach in a New York public school. Pierre's saga to reach miles in elementary school kids was featured in the acclaimed hit documentary "Mad Hot Ballroom." In the feature film version, the setting was changed to a high school and hip-hop music was fused into the ballroom dance steps to broaden the movie's appeal.

In one group's press conference, Antonio, here was how he responded when asked about the actor who could be named in "The Zebra," a Fil-Am movie: "First of all, Dunn is a very good actor. He's a very positive person to work with. He was very helpful, not only in front of the camera but also in all the rehearsals. Because Dunn is a little bit more mature than the rest of the kids, he was the guy who brought the team together. His purpose was to bind everybody. He did a great job. For me, looking at Dunn and all of those kids was like seeing a reflection of myself years ago. I could see windows in Dunn's eyes, which I saw in my eyes when I looked in the mirror 20 years ago, so I started to like problem. It was a frustrated experience to work with Dunn and to recognize myself in some way."

Banderas added that his experience with the young cast would definitely help him in his next picture. "I'll be in one movie in which I have to be with very young actors. 'Take the Lead' was almost like a preparation on how to deal with a group of kids who are way more street-party than me. I have to find my rhythm and pulse with these young actors."

On housing about "Dunn's two-thumbs-up endorsement of him, Dunn, according to his friend Pierre Dulaine, joked that it was because he made the Spanish actor guilty about Spain's colonial rules of the Philippines.

"Days DeGenia, who appears in Left Jacket in "Take the Lead" and whose TV credits include "America's Next Top Model," was just as effusive about Dunn's at the press con. "I met Dunn for the first time at the lobby of the hotel that we were staying in. I thought I knew him. You know how sometimes you see in person and you forget where you saw that person before? Dunn told me, no, I don't think we've met. But suddenly I remembered—I had this image of Dunn from 'Scout.' He was really down-to-earth and fun to work with."

The object of all this praise is an active

BANDERAS, 10C2

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Banderas all praise for Fil-Am co-star

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After working with actresses, how has your initial perception of him changed?

He's simply a great person—artistically, professionally, socially. Working with him only made me think more highly of him. He's a great guy—an amazing artist and a loving human being.

Who is better—Sixto DuCinna or Amina Imman?

We'd be lucky either way... two questions.

You play a Laotian [work name] fisherman. Do you appreciate this aspect of your Filipino heritage that somewhere allows you the flexibility to play a Laotian?

I'm an actor, first and foremost. As such, I do what I can. Not in my heart, Ramon is Pinoy.

The Last Airbender" and Elizabeth's "Materazzi Dropout, John Lenny." Which one do you enjoy most?

It's extreme from the same core in an artist: the search for truth, and vice versa. I'm just thankful that I'm as fortunate as I have been. I try to work harder than everyone else.

What's next?

Whatever the road brings: hopefully, that will include more challenging, heavy-making, screenplay hunting roles in film, TV (hmm, music, whatever. And the hope that those will include collaborations with more Pinoys.

E-mail the columnist at <mapalad_2006@yahoo.com.>

DANTE Bacon (second from right) with Antonio Banderas and the rest of "Take the Lead" cast.

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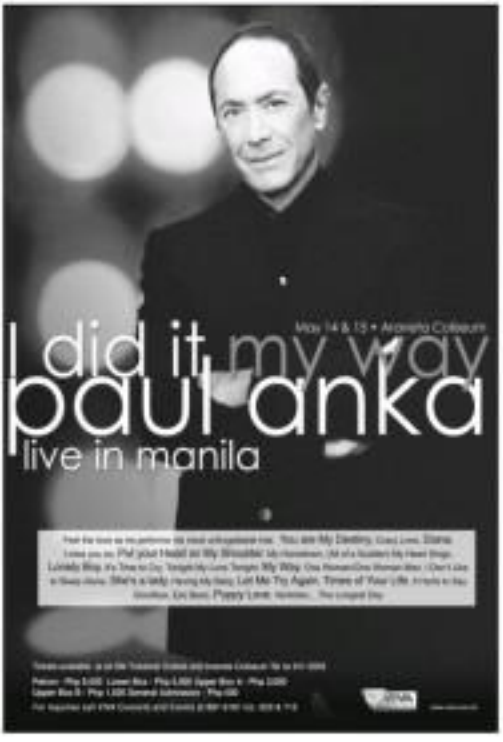

Ultra-sexy Milla Jovovich enjoys kicking ass

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

By Jane Susan B. Hapsales
Contributor

LOS ANGELES—"I'M JUST A simple girl with a Serbian accent, a Russian-sounding name and American attitude," disclosed the ultra-beautiful, ultra-sexy model-turned-actress Milla Jovovich when we (non-reviewer) her at a five-star hotel here.

The 30-year-old stunner with long legs, green eyes, short (by-now) hot and sparkling smile was very comfy and relaxed. She looked classy and even more stunning (at 5'8") in one of her own creations from her Jovovich-Hawk fashion line—a gray blazer, pink blouse and denim pants.

With hardly any makeup, Milla's beauty and charm shone through nonetheless. Before she became an action-heroine-woman, she was a spokesperson for Zilzeal. She has remained perky, down-to-earth, unconfined. And funny.

She can change voices and imitate other actors, including Jack Nicholson. During our interview, she punctuated her hilarious impersonations with a good ton of laughter that was so endearing.

After almost every sentence, she asked, "Do you know what I mean?" by way of explaining herself.

At one point, she went homosexual to the astonished of media people—but turned cheering (upon the learned of her latest movie "Ultraviolet," where she plays Violet or "V," surrounded a complex like subculture of humans called Hemophages.

"I like doing Violet because she reminds me of myself," Milla said. "She is a go-getter, very up getter like the modern woman who needs to do her job. Sure, she realizes she also wants to have a family. I love kids and I always get along with kids. So when Violet struck this immediate bond with the kid (Jai Courtney) by Cameron Bright), I could relate to that."

Written and directed by Kurt Wimmer ("The Recruit," "The Thomas Crown Affair"), "Ultraviolet" is a sci-fi movie from Columbia Pictures, about the battle of the Hemophages against a government that is afraid of their power.

Wimmer admitted in another interview that he had Milla in mind when he wrote the story. He explained, "She has the talents, beauty and athletic ability integral to playing such a complex, fascinating and fun character."

After her memorable appearances in the action-packed thriller "Resident Evil," and "Resident Evil: Apocalypse," Milla said she did not mind her new billed: "A girl who loves to kick ass. I do not mind being in the group of Angelina Jolie, Charlize Theron and the like. I love martial arts. I do most of my stunts and I practice eight to nine hours a day. When I go back to my hotel room, I continue practicing by myself. It's like practicing for the Olympics."

Born to a Russian stage actress, Galina Jovovich, and a Serbian performer, Milla became one of Revlon's "Most Beautiful Women in the World" at age 12. She has entered the screen of more than 150 international commercials and has been dubbed by several magazines as one of the "Sexiest Women in the World" or one of the "Hottest Celebrities."

She 35-22-35 supermodel-actress was found, though, "being beautiful is not a problem for me in my work. My problem is my name—Jovovich's People say, 'Oh it's a foreign sounding name, let's make her an alien!'"

More upbeat

Milla narrated how she once attempted to drop her last name and just use her first name. "But my father is this barbarian dude who told me (in a gruff voice) 'I will disown you!' I told him, 'You will disown me from what?' At a little girl, that was really scary."

As for her "alien roles," her mother used to tell her, "You always look weird in your movies! Why can't you look beautiful?" Why do you have to always look like an alien?"

Milla revealed, "I used to do the emotional demise or when she was come along of Violet, I was excited. I did not realize that I'd have to rehearse and practice more than eight hours a day! Before, I just sat and listened. I did not train all day. I think I'm the kind of person who needs to be inspired and creative all the time."

One of her creative passions right now is Jovovich-Hawk, which she set up last year with her friend of 15 years, model Carmen Hawk. They first opened a showroom in New York City's Greenwich Village last September and now their products are found at Fred Segal in LA, or can be ordered from Creative Entertainment.

"I love dressing, shrinking dresses," Milla confessed. "Carmen and I have been designing cocktail dresses, blazers, mini skirts and the like."

Actress, supermodel, fashion designer, and businesswoman—what else does Milla want on her almost full plate?

She smiled, touched the tip of on her lips, and replied, "A family, a kid, a man who will take care of me."

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SMART 3G Simply Amazing!

Less of Ruffa...

FEEDBACK

From [redacted] (June 16@[redacted].com.) 9999 Cyberzone St. NY Manila, Ingina DC:

I am bothered that most Filipinos seem to have forgotten about Ruffa Gutierrez's participation in the Manila Film festival years years ago. Now you see anything her against like a philanthropist. A lot of people, me included, think Filipinos deserve an apology from her for what she did to that festival along with Lolit Solis. At least Lolit was brave enough to eventually own up to her mistake. Please let us not have short memories!

...more of NUT!

From Maria Lagdameo (ating_dances@mailbank.com), 3000 El Camino Real, 5 Polo Alto Square, Polo Alto, CA:

We should have more Sisters Yours. Ha bush-tube bonbons stories cracks me up. When I moved to the US 20 years ago, I met a couple of Filipinos who wanted to make an impression on me by speaking to English exclusively. They sounded like the persons in Sesame's cubicles. I always ended up telling them, "Tagalog is okay—as long as basta nagsi-intindi ka pa kayo."

JOHNSON is described by his employees as approachable and one of the boys.

Sunday BIZ

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Reyno

Exec gets valuable lessons from fishing

Chevron CEO learns to deal with different folks from hauling salmon and herring in his youth

JOHNSON (with a crowd of Cebuano vendors, business partners and media about the benefits of Cebuano with Pedro on during the product launch at the SM's Seat.

By Tita Arceo-Dumlao

TO THIS DAY, RANDY H. Johnson, country chair and general manager for retail and marketing of Chevron Philippines Inc., can still easily tell fish apart.

This is one of the skills he picked up when he spent the summers of his high school and university years in the late 1970s to the early 1980s working on a large, over 100-foot, long fishing boat that harvested salmon and herring from the cold waters of his native Canada.

Johnson tells the Inquirer that for a while there, he thought fishing was going to be his life.

What's not to like?

He was earning a handsome C$100 a day for reaping rich returns for weeks at a time and being one with the great outdoors.

At the same time, he was working with some "really great people," among them Norwegians who enjoyed the simple life and hard work.

RANDY JOHNSON, country chair and general manager of Chevron

"The Norwegians are unbelievable workers," Johnson says, "they would work straight for days on just a few hours of sleep.

"If you don't work as hard, they won't take you on the next trip," he says.

That would have been tragic for the young Johnson who needed the extra money from helping haul in hundreds of kilograms of fish from the abundant fishing grounds of Canada partly to finance his more expensive athletic pursuits, such as skiing.

"I enjoyed the sport, but skiing requires money," Johnson says. "I had to earn the money myself because my parents were not going to hand me."

Being of Norwegian descent himself, he shared the same mindset for hard work that endeared him to his coworking bosses.

This enabled Johnson to go on till the ripe for sagard age for, and what he earned was more than enough to cover his skiing expenses.

The son of Beaconsfield, British Columbia recalls that during that time he was earning C$300 a day, a good pair of years cost only C$30 a week.

The financial prospects of the fishing world never in fact an enticing than Johnson had to decide in 1982 whether to make a career out of it or put his degree in business from the Simon Fraser University to good use.

His Norwegian bosses would have loved more than happy to make the lean, lined shouldered an honor a permanent part of their crew, but Johnson eventually decided in hung up his longshoreman's cap and enter the world of business.

He joined the finance department of Chevron Canada Limited and promptly took a transfer pay cut.

The pay eventually caught up as he moved up through a number of positions in finance and marketing in the Chevron group, including word manager of Chevron Canada Limited.

Johnson's new major break came when Chevron and Texaco merged operations, requiring the formation of a global marketing coordination team.

Johnson became part of that. Chevron Texaco team that was tasked with transforming the Chevron, Texaco and Caltex operations into a seamless, functioned organization. (Caltex Philippines was renamed Chevron although the business remained the brand Caltex.)

In his assured up, he realized that he got more out of his fishing experience than muscles in his arms and an enduring love affair with the open sea.

Johnson says those years taught him how to effectively deal with different kinds of people with different backgrounds.

Fishing, he adds, was also about working together toward a single goal.

Before, it was to get the most fish. This time around, it was to achieve Chevron's goal to become the preferred brand in the highly competitive petroleum distribution industry.

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Planting RP's flag on foreign shores

By Amy R. Remo

PLANTING THE COUNTRY'S flag on foreign shores has been successfully done by numerous wholly-owned Filipino companies.

And a lot of those reputable brands such as BPM, Universal Robina Corp., Goldilocks and Mama Sita, have begun seeing the brighter side of going transborder with their businesses abroad.

At the recent Food News Kapihan forum held at the Tavern in the Square in Greenhill, Makati, these companies shared their insights on such ventures.

VILLAMAZA

Universal Robina Corp.

Universal Robina Corp., one of the largest packaged food companies in the country, is now setting its sights on Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand as its priority export markets for its biscuits and snacks, and possibly, its C2 beverage.

"URC has the natural thrust to expand to different markets as a major brand," explained Carlo Villamaza, regional export manager of URC.

Villamaza expects URC exports to hit $25 million this year, a 40 percent jump from last year's figures.

Aside from its 11 manufacturing plants in the country, URC currently has on the ground operations in several Asian markets, including Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong. Its export activities are spearheaded by URC has five manufacturing facilities and 23 warehouses.

Villamaza, according to URC's country head to increasing a dominant player in the Asian market and eventually, in the international arena.

"We're taking baby steps—we start at becoming a major player in Asia with our line of snack foods, cup noodles, biscuits, candies and chocolates, to name a few," said Villamaza.

One of the major challenges in breaking into the mainstream, however, is establishing brand equity.

Villamaza explained that URC encountered several competitors that wanted to get URC as a supplier—which means that URC products will be marketed and sold under a different brand.

"But we stuck to our guns. Our mission is to globalize the Jack & Jill brand. We are starting with countries nearby that are manageable," Villamaza said.

To date, URC is exporting to more than 40 countries, with its investments continuing to demonstrate strong growth momentum particularly in Asian countries through its line of products and safety studies.

"With competitive pricing and simple market knowledge, we think our goal of becoming one of the biggest players in Asia may not be too far ahead," added Villamaza.

Goldilocks

Goldilocks Bakeshop Inc., the country's leading bakeshop, is setting its sights on claiming franchises in Asia within the next few years as part of its expansion program.

"We wanted to plant the Philippine flag abroad in terms of culture that is uniquely Filipino," said Goldilocks public relations consultant Alfred Borlaza.

In the next few years, Goldilocks is eyeing Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand as potential markets.

Goldilocks USA, an affiliate of Goldilocks, meanwhile, plans to set up a new commissary on the East Coast of the United States to add to its existing commissary in California.

"The commissary may cost roughly $1 million," said company communications manager Arlo Dolor Santos.

Goldilocks USA runs 17 branches, 16 in the United States and one in Vancouver, Canada.

Dolor Santos also said Goldilocks was adding between 15 and 20 branches this year, including one in Hugo City, where the founders of Goldilocks are based. To date, Goldilocks operates 150 branches worldwide.

Goldilocks owns its rents to a simple one-door apartment in a two-story structure at 2300 Wenang Tulee Street in Makati.

The founders had a simple vision: to produce high-quality, high-value, but affordable products and this has guided every aspect of the Goldilocks business for 48 years.

Mama Sita

Mangold Commodities Corp., manufacturer of the Mama Sita's line of mixes and sauces, started to market its products in the overseas market as early as 1981, a year after it was founded.

"We now do all over the world from US, Europe, South Africa, Israel in Middle East—wherever there are Filipinos," said Mama Sita's Ramon Reyes.

Catering to overseas Filipinos seemed like a natural move for their business.

"It costs a lot to promote products locally, given so many existing brands and similar products, so we just concentrated on overseas Filipinos," said Reyes.

And it worked—as their faces, he added, treasure Filipinos, since they like your product, they usually stick with it and recommend it to family and friends—especially for overseas Filipinos, who bring Mama Sita's products to various parts of the world.

Mama Sita found a breakthrough in the US market in 1981 and its product line (each mother sauce) and sauces) has since then expanded to include more marinades products which are now widely exported to different parts of the world.

Last year, Mama Sita reportedly a 30 percent growth from the previous year, translating roughly to $3 million in sales.

Reyes said that Mama Sita is now eyeing on further tapping the mainstream local and international markets with its line of mixes and sauces through a joint venture with a Hong Kong investment company.

He added that the capital firm tapped Mama Sita to produce a particular product line, which will be marketed still under the Mama Sita brand name.

In the Philippines, Mama Sita's products have been made available nationwide.

"Now we have become more aggressive in promoting and selling Mama Sita products in the country," said Reyes.

GERMAN

HABARABAG

BPM Corp.

Although currently the second largest food and beverage company in the country, BPM Corp. is not relatively a new player in the export business.

"BPM is a homegrown and proudly Filipino and we have, for almost 50 years, been a strong player in the domestic market," said BPM vice president Imelda Madayag.

Madayag said BPM's growth today primarily came from expansions, acquisitions and have on the domestic market, which they have aggressively done in the '90s.

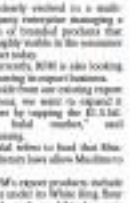
From being the first Bony mil in South East Asia in 1957, BPM has slowly evolved to a multi-company enterprise managing a cluster of branded products that occupy leadership in the consumer market today.

Currently, BPM is also looking at growing its export business.

"Aside from our existing export business, we want to expand it further by tapping the $2.5 billion halal market," said Madayag.

Halal refers to food that Muslims can eat.

BPM's export products include mixes under its White King flour brand, such as bibingka, pansit, and its Selecta blue chocolate milk brand.



BITES

Madayag said BPM expected to boost export sales this year to around $7 million from $5.4 million last year.

The next increase in volume of most market products such as pansit canton, and the normal tastes of its tropical price and are crown brands for the export market, is expected to propel growth for the company this year.

To date, BPM exports products to 20 countries, the bulk of which goes to the United States of America, Canada, Hawaii and Guam.

It also exports to the Middle East, Pacific Islands, India, Europe and Japan.

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Development of wind power set

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCE Inc., a joint venture between Energy Logics of Canada and Transnational Diversified Corp. is set to develop a 30 MW wind power in the country with initial exploration in Zambales, Cebu and Ilocos Norte.

Wind power is among several new and renewable energy (NRE) source development projects of the DOE anchored on its commitment to provide greater opportunities to the underprivileged. Further, RE Act encourages private sector participation in the exploration, development, utilization and commercialization of renewable energy resources for power generation and other energy uses.

"We are setting our aims towards more sustainable energy efficiency to reach the greater majority and hope that the NRE development program becomes a key solution," says Undersecretary Victor Anthony Ahaya.

Energy Logics Inc. is a leading company in the Canadian Wind Power Sector, while Transnational Diversified Corp. (TDC) is the investment and holding company of the Transnational Diversified Group (TDG), a Philippine conglomerate with interests in Logistics, Shipping, Air & Travel, Information & Communication Technology and Energy.

TDC and MEL president Sherry C. Delgado says: "TDC is committed to improving the lives of the Filipino and the environment in which we live. In this latest development, TDC has brought a world class renewable energy group from Canada as a partner to provide cleaner and more reliable energy infrastructure in the Philippines. The contract is envisaged to generate 30 MW of renewable energy to the Philippines will bring to the Philippines over $150 million of investments and will not only act as a significant step forward in many tangible and intangible ways. We are firm believers in moving this country forward and proving not just to ourselves, but to the world, that the Philippines can indeed be an investment friendly country that is rich in natural and human resources."

(FROM left) Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya, Maria E. Delgado, Officer-in-Charge and Energy Cabana of Alternative Energy Logics Inc. pose renamed "Energy Logics Philippines Inc.") during the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Energy and AEI.

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Exec gets valuable lessons from fishing

From page B4

Johnson got his chance to lead his own team when he was appointed country chairman of Chevron Philippines Inc. in May of 2004—his first crack at being a chief executive officer.

He, however, admits that while he jumped on the chance to go in the Philippines, married as he is to explore a new place, he did not know much about the country.

"When my bosses asked me, what about the Philippines? I said, where?" Johnson says, "the Philippines is really not that well known in North America."

The little that he knew then about the country he learned from a Filipino nanny who used to take care of his two children.

But never one to back off from a challenge, he and his family moved to the country in December of 2003, just two months after he learned of the opening, and they were literally welcomed with a bang.

"I was here for New Year's and I have never seen so many fireworks in my entire life," Johnson recalls. "Chevron is really celebrated in a big way here compared to Indonesia."

That was an impression that Johnson's sister at Chevron Philippines.

After close to two years at the helm, Johnson says he has adjusted to the many differences in culture and even language that he had to understand to make the business grow.

And apart from the fact that he can now also say g kay kaya in tropical Philippines, he has no regrets. He has even taken up mountain biking to keep in shape.

"In the last few months, you are lulled into the feeling that because everybody speaks in English, you all must the same thing," Johnson says, "actually, the same words may mean different things in different people."

One example is the word "already."

He says that in Canada, if somebody says "already" it means that a job was done extra fast or was ahead of schedule.

"Here, I learned that it just means that it's done, no matter how long it took," Johnson says.

He says he had to keep an eye out for those subtle differences because it may have some impact on how things are done.

He says this is why he always checks up on his staff and Chevron's business partners and notes he's just as much sure that they are on the same page, and are clear about their goals and how to achieve them together.

"They don't seem to mind at his employees describe Johnson as an "approachable" boss for which they would not mind eying out new ways of getting the job done.

Getting their act together is vital for Johnson as Chevron attempts to gain a bigger share of a tough market marked with rising prices in the pumps.

"It's a tough market because with crude oil at $62 a barrel, demand for petroleum is unlikely to grow significantly unless prices soften," he says.

Chevron recently introduced Techron to Philippine sales. The 80-year-old Johnson says Techron makes its gasoline products "unbeatable" when it comes to quality, and quality is what he wants Chevron to be known for in the Philippines.

From Surigao lake to Manila supermarkets

Northern Mindanao produces first-class dried fish

By Myrna Rodriguez-Co
Coordinator, DTI Purchase for Small-Scale Industries

MANTE, SURIGAO DEL NORTE—Local folks call it pinipig. However, it is known as white gold. However it is called, this freshwater fish will go on record for having made it from Lake Mainit in Surigao del Norte to a processing plant in an agrarian reform community in the province, to big supermarkets in Metro Manila and Central Luzon.

Dried pinipig, produced by the Mainit ARC II, has begun to be sold in 180-gram, 250-gram, and 1 kg packs in retail outlets in the metropolis. Considered "first-class dried fish" in the category of dried things and dry goods dried pinipig commands a premium price in the market.

How this was accomplished is a story of a collaboration among three partners. A team from the Philippine Australia Technical Support for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (PATSAR), the upland marketing foundation Inc. (UMFI), otherwise known as the private-sector partner, and a women's group from the Mainit ARC II.

The story shows that with right technical support, adoption of appropriate technologies and collaboration with private sector partners, agrarian reform communities can develop value-adding products worthy of big or "mainstream" markets.

Identifying the product, site

Lake Mainit, with a 124,500-ha area and a 50-km stretch of lakeshore, is the fourth largest lake in the country and the most

MARKETING of dried pinipig in a Surigao market uses private sector promotional strategies.

significant water body in the province. It teems with catfish, mudfish, carp, tilapia and eel, aside from pinipig.

A resource inventory revealed the bright potential of pinipig for new product development and subsequent wide-scale marketing. The harvest of this fish is estimated to be 2,000 kg a year.

Subsequently, a pre-feasibility study of pinipig-drying determined the work process, equipment requirements, and production capacity. It also forecast sales, predicted break-even points, identified marketing methods and channels, and studied financial aspects like capital and startup costs, income targets, costing and pricing.

Eighteen women from Mainit ARC then proceeded to train in this drying technology and eventually in managing the project. They were selected for their interest, willingness to learn and commitment.

Conducted by the UMFI, the training initially focused on two aspects. Good manufacturing processes (GMP) and basic food processing.

A series of sensory tests followed to determine how the market would accept the product in terms of taste, aroma, color, texture and other physical attributes.

In a month, a final prototype was ready.

Meanwhile, product packaging and labeling were also evolving. At prototype stage, the product was wrapped simply in cellophane wrappers. This was modified several times as results of the various tests came in.

The final packaging adopted uses a high-density polyethylene plastic bag—economical, labeled, resealable and microwavable.

Marketing

A marketing plan was prepared by the women, after training on marketing and business systems with UMFI experts.

The plan identified both local and mainstream markets.

The local market are the local residents as well as tourists and travelers either visiting or passing through Surigao en route to other destinations in Mindanao. Seaports, bus terminals, public markets and supermarkets in the province were identified as retail locations.

The mainstream market is the 11M plus retail outlets in Metro Manila and Central Luzon that comprise the network of UMFI.

Mainstream marketing

With final product formulation, skills and marketing in place, full production is underway.

By this time, the project would have installed its own mechanical dryer, courtesy of the municipal and provincial governments, which pledged donations.

DRIED. Harvest of pinipig is processed using industry-prescribed good manufacturing practices (GMP).

By then, full capacity production of 150 kg fresh fish a day would have been achieved. By then too, the enterprise would have been licensed by the Bureau of Food and Drug (BFAD).

At full capacity, the plant should be able to produce 225 kg of dried fish a month, or 1,912,500 production cost. This will generate sales of P71,700 a month and net profit of P1,905.

Full blown production would also enable the project to go into mainstream marketing.

For the UMFI market network alone, the requirement is 120 kg of dried pinipig a month, involving only a few of its huge retailing network.

Short and long term benefits

At the present limited volume, each of the women stands to earn an additional income of about P1,500 a month. This compares well with the meager income from rice and coconut farming.

Aside from cash income, the women are learning technical and managerial skills. Not only are they being trained in product and shop technology but also in market positioning, supervisory matters and management. The 6 coaches show poverty-alleviating activities many rural women are used to. This prepares them for entrepreneurship of the innovative kind.

As sales increase and production expands, more workers need to be hired, creating job opportunities in the community, increasing purchasing power and building the local economy.

Fishermen around Lake Mainit stand to prosper, too, as they try to increase their fish-drying facility's growing demand for their white gold catch.

Long journey

It has been a long way from the lake waters of Surigao to the supermarkets of Manila. As Yu Jefrano of PATSAR/ARD puts it: "The way has neither been easy nor smooth, taking 15 months of capability building, product development, market building and, yes, partnership-developing."

"But the prospect is worth all these—especially when the projects becomes sustainable and replicable as it is expected to be," adds colleague Ana Dumagat.

Tent rises in Subic

By Mariel O. Salazar

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT HAS long been seen as an alternative business and tourism hub in the country. Its strategic location and natural wonders are just some of its many advantages.

Believing that more investors and tourists will see what Subic Bay has to offer, Legend International Resorts Ltd. (LRL) recently opened its third hotel at the Freeport.

El Centro, or "The Center," is actually a spacious multi-purpose tent, the first of its kind to rise in Subic.

The 1,000-square meter tent measures 30 meters wide with a central height span of 12.5 meters. It is made of PVC-coated polyester by Espo-Logistics, and was manufactured in Germany.

Khoo Boo Hoon, who was behind the construction of the convention, sports and cultural center, says the tent is designed to withstand typhoon winds with a speed of up to 100 kilometers an hour.

It was set up to accommodate large functions and sports activities. The El Centro can cater to 1,000 people can also be divided into two major conference rooms for smaller events.

El Centro sits across the Waterfront beach and is only minutes away from Legenda Hotel, Subic's premier hotel. Once open for inspection, El Centro is to host boat launching competitions, but it will also be marketed to house trade exhibits, cultural, sports and entertainment activities.

"I wanted Legend International Resorts to have something out of the ordinary in operating a chain of meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (or what he calls MICE) business in the country," he says.

He wanted a tent as opposed to the conventional concrete structure "so there is room in Subic."

The idea of a "tent" as a venue for large gatherings is patterned after similar structures in Europe and the United States. Similar structures are increasingly becoming popular venues in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

More than just a tent, El Centro has an annex that houses a fully equipped kitchen, audio-visual room, air-cooled LCD screens and ample storage facilities.

Its exclusive hall is complemented by specially designed Perrault chandeliers that provide a view of the Waterfront beach.

Khoo says El Centro is a valuable addition to the Legend group's facilities in Subic.

"El Centro complements Cebu MICE (business) center in those local property in Subic, soon-to-be seven restaurants, eight shopping arcades, 18 function rooms, three swimming pools, two karaoke centers, a ballroom and the company's recently announced state-of-the-art entertainment complex," he says.

El Centro recently hosted "Starlight Ladies" with two weekend performances of dancers from the Russian Dance Agency. It also featured the live telecast of boxer Brian Villamor's recent fight.

Khoo personally supervised the construction of El Centro, from its conception to approval of budget and materials used.

Khoo observes that the number of hotels each other facilities in the Freeport, while not exactly up to standard and international standards, is good enough to make Subic an alternative convention destination.

But more rooms need to be put up.

"We definitely need more rooms and entertainment facilities," he says. "My own estimate is an additional 5,000 rooms and two or more centers are needed at the very minimum for Subic to be a significant player in the business industry, at least within the country."

DMCI Homes, popular developer of in-city, resort-residential communities, is conducting a month-long exhibit at the ground floor of Waltermart in Makati to showcase the company's latest condominium projects—Roxas Garden Residences in Paranaque, Mayfield Park Residences in Pasig and Mahogany Place in Tagaig. The sales exhibits will run until today. For inquiries, call 888-3333 or visit www.dmcihomes.com.

Chocolate-making workshop for kids

SOMET YOUR CHILDREN'S school break this summer productive by letting them learn the technique of easy chocolate making and modeling in a day-long seminar on chocolate making for kids on April 8, Saturday at the Vermont Bloome Unlimited at 9 Annas Rd., Project 3, Quezon City from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The participants will be taught of how to mix and mold chocolate in various shapes and forms from their favorite cartoon characters to floral and fun shape designs.

Parents and guys could accompany their kids to the seminar venue. For questions, call 955-28-36, 952-60-28, 913-68-32, 911-20-66 and 913-66-11.

DOT creates first computerized jobs databank

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM (DOT) is setting up a high-tech hiring system and tech-technology infrastructure for the Tourism Jobs Fair, which will be staged in Cebu City on April 3 to 5, Davao City on April 4 to 6, and Manila on April 10 to 12.

Intended exclusively for the travel and tourism industry, the fair constitutes the latest phase of the DOT's "Tourism2006 Cebu, Oppor unities, Featured" program, which is designed to address the dearth of qualified workers to fill up job openings in tourism, the need for improvement of the current Bi-Tourism curriculum to meet the actual needs of tourism enterprises, and the absence of continuing skills training to upgrade the competence of the labor force.

The event will go beyond the usual concept of job fairs by serving as DOT's one-stop venue for employers, students and the labor force to source each other's needs and create an employment match.

The Tourism Jobs Program Secretariat Cel. 3231153, 5210514 loc. 206/206/211) is urging employers, schools and applicants to visit various markets-to-label jobs to register online (www.tourismjobs.ph).

The website is available all year round. It will continue to gather vacancy postings from various industry employers and applications from job seekers even after the fair. Employers and applicants who have already registered may continue to access their profiles for updates, for new vacancy listings and post new job descriptions.

During online or onsite registration, a unique identification number (UIN) will be issued to every applicant.

China autonomous region trade fair to end today

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, one of China's important provincial governmental organizations, which administers and coordinates international trade & economic cooperation, domestic trade and other affairs has been holding a the Guangxi Commodities Exhibition since March 30 and will end today the World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM).

This showcase of Guangxi is sponsored by the People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and organized by Guangxi Department of Commerce. Other supporting business and organizations include the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Philippines, Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. and Filipino-Chinese Amity Club Inc.

The import and export trade volume between Guangxi and the Philippines has reached $11.53 million in 2004 and $15 million in 2005 respectively.

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Ballet business booms

VILLA Cherina and Ria Bere

THE SIGNIFICANT number of ballet schools around the metro not only signifies the profitability of such a business endeavor—it also asserts that Filipinos have unquestionable talent and skills for dance.

Nilla C. Damian, a noted dramatic ballerina whose talent and passion have made her world-known, has teamed up with entrepreneurs Ge and Gerry Bere for a partnership that recently launched the "Villena and Nilla C. Damian Ballet Studio."

Damian and the Bere couple both own and run distinctive ballet schools, but following a common vision to "make the highest standard of classical ballet training available for real today," the partners decided to forge the alliance for a new direction in the ballet school industry.

Formerly called Villena Damian, the studio is located at Cubao, Quezon City and owned by the Bere couple. It was opened in year 2000 and enjoyed student success for its wide variety of dance classes catering to students from all ages and proficiency levels. Late last year, however, the Bere couple decided to make room a long-ranging plan to move to another location in Mindanao. Amicable and subsequently done the Cubao studio.

"Ge and Gerry's two daughters were my ballet students when they were in grade school, and after seeing their family grow very close to me, I found them very prime to transfer to Mindanao for. I just casually mentioned that it was sad for them to close the studio, since it has established a reputation and is well-equipped, so Jim made a kind of informal offer if I was interested in running it, and I said yes," Damian relates.

Damian, who trained in New York and performed all over the world during her heyday as a ballerina, holds an outstanding resume which has led her to establish the School of Ballet and Dramatics, now known as The Nilla C. Damian School of Ballet. It has five branches: a main studio in Marcos, Quezon City school-based studios at the Isabel College, St. Paul College Pasig, and St. Dominic University, Quezon City, at the New Manila Ballet Center, and now, the Villena and Nilla C. Damian Ballet.

She is also the co-author of the National Ballet Syllabus and the Philippine coordinator of the Australian Conservatory of Ballet (ACB) Syllabus (Revised Edition) Method written by Christine Webb. As such, the Villena and Nilla C. Damian Ballet will follow this syllabus which is implemented in all of Damian's schools.

But expansion is expected. Quite in the ballet world comes plenty the Bere couple's business acumen, aside from the ballet school, Ge and Gerry Bere also own and run Agribusiness Filipino Inc., the country's largest producer of cutflowering.

"Both Villena Ballet and Nilla Damian Ballet School may remain and running operations, including Ballet ang Kanda- mond accomplish into the new company. Villena is aiming to business operations and Nilla Damian's strength is as the technical aspects of running a school," says Ge.

The partnership also aims for an immediate increase in total student enrollment, which will boost revenues at a lower cost of operating.

"If the partnership generates more funds than will be pumped back into the school operations, the school is able to implement programs to further improve teaching efficiency. Every step forward, we see Villena and Nilla C. Damian Ballet more economically empowered to inspire a large population of young people to realize their artistic dreams," Ge further explains.

The new partnership takes effect this summer season, in time to accommodate vacationing students. Damian will serve as the Ballet Director while Ge will retain his role as School Administrator.

As Ballet Directress, I will oversee artistic and technical aspects and make sure our teachers are competent. We will also introduce examinations with school concerts every other year, so that we are more focused on the classes/progression," Damian adds.

Villena and Nilla C. Damian Ballet will also offer other types of dance including jazz, acrobatic dancing, and contemporary dance, among others.

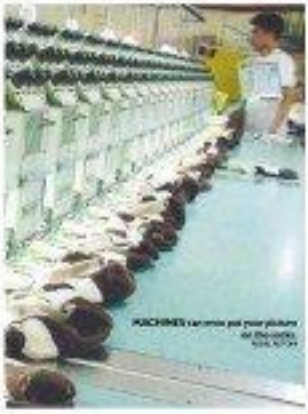
Damian said Ge sees that running a ballet school is profitable enough, which is why many institutions are offering the same services. The difference between, members on the academic classes/ses, whether they have been trained well and are confident enough to perform on stage.

"There is enough room for more top caliber ballet schools. There are more than enough parents wanting to the population. Indeed, more competition results in better instructors about the contribution of ballet to the development of the youth, especially in the areas of discipline and commitment. We put up a ballet school not because it is lucrative but because of our passion to help young people discover their potential in performing arts, and help them maximize such potential," Ge concluded.

Villena and Nilla C. Damian Ballet is located at the ground floor of the ABS Building, 52 New York St., Cubao, Quezon City. Offers summer workshops in classical ballet, jazz and street dancing starting April. For inquiries, call 912-4282/912-4918 or 9907441.

From grandma's labels to high-tech machines

Sock maker started with 48 pairs every eight hours; now it's 6,500 pairs every 24 hours



MACHINES can even put your picture on the socks.

By Alexa H. Bacay

IT STARTED IN 1967 AS A SMALL sock business with two machines and a few sock knits. Producing only two dozen pairs of socks per machine every eight hours, by the 1980s, Buddy Tan, personal assistant of Burlington Industries Philippines, was even his grandmother's helping with the labeling. Now, the company renamed Burlington Industries from Bilan Knit Manufacturing Corp., produces 6,500 pairs of socks, 24 hours a day.

"Maybe it was the vision of my uncle Pete Tan," says Buddy of Burlington's success. Pete is the president of Burlington Industries, the believed that "socks are a very basic commodity."

The biggest challenge the company had to overcome is finding a place in the market. When Burlington started, there were only a few players, but "before now on the industry you have to establish your niche and create a demand for your product."

In the late '70s, Burlington would only be made known to people through their price ads.

In the '80s it became aggressive in marketing and promotions and got basketball player Norman Black as their endorser.

In 1990s they used TV ads to widen their reach on the market.

In the '90s, they launched the Burlington Basketball tips which were basketball technique shown on TV in between NBA breaks. Because of this, Burlington received a special citation from the Catholic Mass Media Awards in 1999.

Today, although it enjoys more popularity, Burlington has to compete with foreign brands that have penetrated the local market more as well.

"We've been established," Buddy says on how he manages to compete with the other brands. "We're almost nearing our 40th [year] so, so it would be our experience in the industry on how for the past 20 plus years, we've been doing socks from meeting to meeting. We can say we have the expertise."

"We're also always trying to come up with something new for the market," he adds. "You need to take care of your first business, which is socks," says Buddy. "It's really getting competitive because of the globalization of fashion. So you have importation, price war, but we've always been focusing on quality."

In research and development (R&D) continuously comes up with product innovations to suit the growing needs of the market.

Their latest innovation is the Burlington Shock ST, which is an impact absorbing sock designed to prevent injuries for athletes who play on hard surfaces. It has extra thick shock pads that cushion the foot and protect knee joints in the process. Its yarn construction assists in the prevention of blisters and abrasions.

"Well, the concept of the socks is to give proper support to the feet of the athlete," explains Buddy. "If you have injuries to the ankles, and then if the knees, then literally you can't play anymore."

In October last year, Burlington launched its Dribble socks, evolved socks that help keep the feet cool five.

"They're also trying to find a niche in the jog industry by coming up with the Trek Gear and Jogger, which targets the youth for their school needs and for outdoor activities.

Every company is not without their share of obstacles. Burlington also went through some financial difficulties.

"We had to restructure," explains Buddy, which resulted in Burlington eventually becoming a family business.

Buddy believes that having built a name for their brand, the next target would be expansion.

"We've invested a lot on the brand in terms of quality and the advertisements that we did, so in the future if we could come up with a complete product line, that would be our next target," he explains.

Burlington has 3,000 in manufacturer Punta Ignacio, Subic for mid socks and Camp One door socks. They're also forming the Hanesbrands and Salomo brands.

"I think one of our advantages now is the modernization of equipment wherein we phased out all our mechanical machines and replaced them with computerized machines," says Buddy. He cites that the computerized machines are very flexible. "I can take your picture and from that, your face are will come out as socks!

"Our direction now is to come out with something more innovative, something different—different and market in the consumer. Not only in the design, but something functional as well," adds Buddy.

As an advertising tool, Burlington sponsors the Philippine Basketball Association and has been the "official socks" of the PBA since 1988.

As part of the corporate thrust of prompting youth in sports development, Buddy started the RP Youth Cage Team in 2002. The team won the 2006 Stella Junior Championship in Lucena in 2004.

Burlington is also a major sponsor of National Black's Basketball Shift Camp which is a specialized and intensive basketball training camp. This involves basketball's contemporary and past experiences, going from school to school to share their knowledge and skills to the youth with the youth.

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AYALA SOUTHVALE VILLAGE SONERA

Business opportunities and success stories

Hard work, patience and honesty are this lady's secret to success

FOR ANY PERSON "recruited" to get into an MLM (multi-level marketing) business or network marketing, the opportunity will be viewed with skepticism. For the JC Spice Corp., this story stands out to illustrate the triumph of the ordinary Filipino's quest for a better or more meaningful life. These interviews were mostly conducted in the vernacular and translated to English.

Lenora C. Arienza, maker of Arienza herbal soap, is a wife and mother of five children whose story worries from a P500 clothes and manufacturing and a handsome notch for a house she was paying for to how she managed to acquire two houses since.

Living a hand life in the mid-90s, with a growing young family, she began a career as a bath soap agent. Later, customers began to bother her with questions about the soap which she couldn't answer. She wasn't even satisfied with the soap itself and so, she decided to take a different route by learning how to make and bring soaps to make a better soap. Signing up for a soap-making seminar at the DTI, the three-day course was not enough to make you a soap manufacturer expert but Ading Nena's inherent trait to turn disappointment and struggle around. When she decides to pursue something, she is determined

ARIENZA

to see it through in spite any hardships.

"When we started it was just a backyard business. I started with my children. I borrowed my capital."

The results the very hard beginnings from their house in Antipolo, Rizal at which time she also joined and became a cluster of Amway Company one of the best-runner direct selling companies of JC Spice presidents, Jerry Caruso. The opportunity knocked when Ading Nena was still with Amway in the late 90s. Jess and Dina Castro had already begun JC Health and were looking for a soap supplier.

"Ading Nena" as she is fondly called, brought her simple and raw the composition from the products with blended tastes

told not on the table. So it was with great surprise that her soap was chosen among the many brands' tastes. She learned later that the JC Manila president himself tried it and was satisfied. And from that time on, they agreed to help each other and be partners in developing the soap and making it available to the market.

Dina Castro, being the product development director and in charge of the packaging and also with how Sorsogon, JC Spice's farmers selling soap was born.

"When they chose our product, I thanked God. Sir Jerry and Ma'am Dina were easy to talk to," she says.

After her short seminar at DTI, with less handicaps to guide her, she spent much money on trial and error formula in concocting her soap, but she never gave up and used new ways to improve on it.

From the values she learned in her personal life which she applied to her own family and the way she runs her business, as manufacturers-supplies to JC Spice, she feels more at ease and at home with the couple who grew her the push to make Sorsogon what it is today.

Life has changed dramatically since for the Arienza family but simple and frugal living are still applied. She also applies a hands-on policy to her business even if she has people working for her now. Not leaving anything to chance that might create irreparable damages must be avoided at all cost. The Filipino values of "pagpalang sa kapwa," is also a trend in doing business with associates. And living with the JC family, from the very beginning, Ading Nena mastered in her business acumen with all the learning she had and found the ideal partners in the people, whom she trusts and can share values with, and who, helped her get started as a manufacturer-supplier.

She still has would-be entrepreneurs, especially those with humble beginnings like her, where things have been so much used in business, which she emphasized as a new avenue in the JC company: "Even when I was still a newsmaker, when I was making people I would tell them that to succeed, you have to be hard-working, patient and honest. These three are needed in whatever you do. Without these you will get nowhere."

DELINDA OY

Daughter's fascination evolves into a franchising venture for mom

HER DAUGHTER'S ATTRACTION to stuffed animals created for Ms. Belinda Oy a business opportunity.

Oy brought into the country the first ever-in-your-own-stuffed-animal cross promoted by Animalland, an international, multi-based group of retail stores and kiosks that allow stuffed-animal lovers all over the world to create and dress their own stuffed-animal.

"We discovered the possibilities when we were shopping in the US and saw young and old alike, buzzing happily and earning cuddles with stuffed toys inside. Then, we found out that it's a do-it-yourself-thingy. My daughter fell in love with the idea, then, inspiring me to bring home the concept," says Oy, Animalland's Chief Executive Officer in the Philippines.

She continued, "Definitely, there's big money in franchising, especially with Animalland since this is very unique, unrivalled in the fun complete create-your-own-stuffed-animal business in the country, which gives guests an unbelievable experience while creating their stuffed toys. This is very interactive and I believe our guests, from ages 2-100, would love to get involved into something that is created by their own hands."

With the help of my father and brother Wee-builders, a guest goes through eight interactive stations: 1) Choose Your Animal (Can I stitch over 40 animal skins to choose from); 2) Stuff Your Animal (Our Staff is fun and helpful-perfect for the Make A Wish For Your Animal before you put the wishing star inside your animal); 3) Hear Your Animal Heart (we could record your personalized greetings or your own choice of songs); 4) Stuff Your Animal (where your animal takes in its bath to get clean); 5) Dress Your Animal (choose from our wide range of outfits—underwear, tuxedos, fashionables, etc.—and accessories); 6) Name Your Animal (where you can christen your stuffed animal and even get his own birth certificate), and the last station, Take Home Your Animal, where you're given a cute-as-can-be carry your new friend.

Animalland plans to open other highly-interactive stations such as the Animal Salon (complete with wigs and other hair accessories), Animal Hospital (for broken or worn-out animals), Animal Nursery (for baby animals) and Animal Jail (for the parents who want their tot's own custody).

Oy did not hesitate to invest in America's acquisition, which is also famous in United Kingdom, Australia, Puerto Rico and Mexico.

"The entire process, in itself, is enticing and interesting. Its true alone is already saleable. More so, with franchising, conceptually if it's a global brand, you are assured of international standards that boost of quality service. Also, with the help of our mother company in USA, we are able to support franchisees all the way, starting from day 1—through operations, training of personnel, inventories, to advertising, and marketing. Meaning, less worries for beginners in the business as we guide them each step of the way."

In fact, in the three years of time since Animalland Philippines put up shop in SM City Cebu in December 2003, Oy has been receiving overwhelming feedback from guests, most of them returning ones.

"It's addicting. You'd fall in love with the "projects" because it's like giving birth to your own baby. And each animal, which would roughly cost P900, to P1,500 with accessories, is a collector's item because, even one of them is a limited edition animal as new animals are introduced.

Oy says that Animalland's main goal is to provide an interactive entertainment experience based on love and friendship that connects people to stuffed animals and to each another. And with Animalland's stuffed-animal-friends, Oy hopes their guests would be able to spread more love and joy in humankind. A member of Penergy, Animalland is open for franchising. For inquiries call 5307981 or 3612388. Or visit Animalland at the 3rd level of City Walk 2, Eastwood City 4th level of Shangri-La Mall, and 3rd level of Powerplant Mall and soon to be Kingdom at the Mall of Asia.

HT & T Travel Phils. Australian Ambassador Tony Hely (center) graced the opening recently of the Philippine office of HT & T Travel, Inc., general sales agent of Qantas Airways Ltd. on the 16th floor of the Pryce Tower on Paseo de Roxas, Makati City. HT & T Philippines president and CEO Josephine Ho (left) welcomed the ambassador and other guests. Bob Gerwig (left), Qantas head of sales and marketing, Stephen Limbrick, Qantas regional manager-Southeast Asia, and Bonnie Chee (partly hidden), Holiday Tours & Travel Pte. Ltd. managing director.

From garment-making to direct-selling

TO REMAIN IN THE FOREFRONT of fashion direct selling and networking for 14 years to go.

Armed with nothing but their high hopes and burning desire to help others achieve their dreams, Boardwalk Business Center was born.

According to Boardwalk Chief Operating Officer, Glenda Pingol, "What makes our business work is the fact that we get to help every Filipino family realize their dreams by offering them equal opportunity to most of our business partners who have small businesses with manageable investment. One could earn your desired business endeavors as high as hundreds of thousands with min-

imal investment as low as P500 only.

Boardwalk has positioned its branches all over the country. Right now, they have 35 branches, 20 information centers and a fully computerized system which allows its members to monitor their sales performances and their earnings wherever they are. To balance their expansion programs, Boardwalk is continuously moving even on the far flung areas on the country to accommodate the needs of the growing number of Filipino consumers.

Boardwalk offers free membership to interested individuals all over the world. There are more than 500,000 members and business partners today. Boardwalk president Bernard Madera said, "What we offer is a risk-free business.

We make our members set their own pace and encourage them to challenge themselves so to how much money they would like to earn. We groom them, help them develop their potentials to the fullest, in that way we value the presence of each other to the business. We practice no-retention as an important element to keep our business going and we are committed to keep it that way."

A member can get lifetime income discounts, earn from their personal selling activities or share the business privileges through recruitment and networking with their friends. They can get the package to fit their own career growth at their own pace and time. Boardwalk's partnership support with their members extends to the point of investing and developing them through continuous training and education, making sure that every partner is equipped with good marketing and entrepreneurial skill in guarantee income.

"We learn and listen to the requirements of the customers with utmost sincerity which leads us to the development of products that are unfailingly authentic, balanced and very much affordable which lets ordinary consumers enjoy without having to spend an insane paycheck," stated Pingol.

For queries, go to a Boardwalk branch or business information center or call 636-6125 / 23-631-9999.

Culture influences how money is saved

NEW YORK—PEOPLE IN THE U.S. has an extra $2.50 lying around, rather than spend it, she will cut back on her expenses so that she ends up having $1.00 to save.

"I can buy groceries that are cheaper or purchase buying into bulk," she said. "I was taught as immigrant homemaker from Italy was who lives in Parsippany, New Jersey.

More Americans, however, practice very different saving habits from Tani. Last year the U.S. household saving rate was negative for the first time since the Great Depression.

While interest rates on low, consumers have been depending heavily on credit to supplement incomes, making them particularly vulnerable to shocks in the economy. Low financing rates made it easier to splurge on new cars and electronics and not just in the United States but countries like Britain and New Zealand as well.

Meanwhile, many foreigners—and non-Asian countries have relatively high rates of saving. In fact, total saving in non-Asian countries amounts to nearly 40 percent of their economic output, compared with only 30 percent in Asian countries, excluding Japan.

Yet, economists and finance can only account for so much of such a significant difference in saving rates. Common beliefs and behavior patterns—in short, culture—may affect saving as much as economic factors, analysts said.

Analysts say quirks in statistics on income, investment and taxes can exaggerate the differences in saving rates between some countries. They also point out, saving rates in the last 20 years have been generally falling around the world.

But when you factor all these adjustments, you are still left with what appear to be cultural differences," said Barry Bosworth, economist with the Brookings Institution in Washington.

When it comes to saving, one of the key differences between Asian and non-Asian cultures has to do with the reasons why people save in the first place, said Bosworth, whose work has focused on the differences in saving patterns between Japan and the United States.

In the Americans, Asians have what Bosworth called a "dynastic" view of saving, investing they often see motivated to accumulate wealth for not beyond their own lifetimes.

"An American might think in terms of saving for their own retirement, but an Asian will think of accumulating resources in terms of saving for their family, for multiple generations in the future," he explained.

Many political leaders and economists have warned the lack of US saving could worsen as baby boomers exit from the workforce. In an economic ode of doom, retirees tend to deplete their savings while workers add to savings.

At a time when many compa-

nies are having to emerge as pension promises made to workers, lack of saving can make the future be retirees seem dire.

Neither heart, lack of US saving underscores the breadth of global financial imbalances that many analysts say will at some point have to be corrected.

Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke has argued that a global "savings glut" in countries such as China and Japan has sent huge amounts of capital overseas to the United States, helping to finance the enormous US trade deficit, which hit a record $723.62 billion last year.

However, if high saving countries decide to slow their purchases of US Treasury securities, interest would rise and possibly drag on the economy—a source politicians and economists say US saving needs to improve soon.

Differences in world view also account for why some cultures save more than others, analysts say.

China, the world's fourth largest economy has an extraordinarily high national saving rate—which includes government and corporate saving—of 50 percent of gross domestic product.

"The Chinese have a deeply entrenched and historically justified sense that the world is unsafe," said Yan Sun, economist at Bates White, a consulting firm in Washington.

"The high saving rate in China is a defense against uncertainty," he said.

Americans, on the other hand, have an essentially optimistic view of the world and a confidence that US political and economic institutions will handle any risks, Sun said. That view contributes to a complacency about saving enough for the future.

"The United States is a country where people see the future is better and are fortunate in making it better for their themselves," said Martin Baily, senior fellow at the Institute for International Economics in Washington.

The rosy view of the future tends to be given in time of reality, analysts generally agree. And the negative household saving leaves many people vulnerable to sudden shocks to the economy such as spikes in energy costs or setbacks in Dept. 13-type attack.

"We can improve saving," said PIMCO's Bosworth. "But until the day arrives in which we finally mentally change our world view, it will not be as we 'rediscover saving," he said.

Perhaps, it will take a change of world view or just plain old pain. Tani, a retired accountant, plans on her monthly expenses by assigning a name to each expense, such "gasoline" or "medicine." When asked whether she would like to do things in her retirement like travel, she said, "It won't. It won't have a name yet."

Reuters

TESSA reminisces to Sergio Mendes music /F2

Sunday LIFESTYLE
Editor Chele Banal-Fuentes

This barbershop makes the cut

PICTURES of leading ladies of yesteryears, including Gloria Romero, Amalia Fuentes, Susan Roces, Rosa Rosal and the late Nida Blanca, grace the walls of this barber shop-cum-beauty salon in Greenhills.

With its vintage photos of the past icons of the silver screen, Don Juan grooms male and female clients along classic lines

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Jim Cortez Pascual

THE MORE A MAN LOSES his hair, the more he troops to the barbershop to have it groomed. That's certainly good news to people at Don Juan Barbershop, as regulars don't seem to mind the frequent trips.

Apart from pampering themselves with their favorite grooming services—from haircuts to hair relaxing, foot spas to body massages, manicures to pedicures—customers can take a trip down memory lane at the grooming center located at the ground floor of Shopwalk in Greenhills (tel. 7233142).

There are no pictures of unknown models sporting the latest hairstyles here, as the barbershop is a virtual gallery of vintage black-and-white studio shots of such Filipino matinee idols as Mario Montenegro, Hector de Villa, Leopoldo Salcedo, Armando Goyena, Eduardo Gonzalez and Pancho Magalona, among others.

Pictures of the late Fernando Poe Jr. and his sons Ronnie have also entered their place atop the barbershop's mirrors. But the display is no pantheon of dead idols, as the gracing images of Dolphy, Eddie Garcia and deposed President Joseph Estrada are also on display.

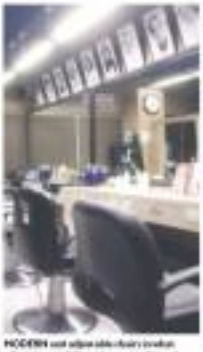
"These images have become like a bridge between the past and the present," says Don Juan owner Buddy de Jesus, president of Alpha Music Corp. "People my age can nostalgically reminisce to these visuals, while their children and grandchildren are fascinated as they go through the pictures."

Such classic photos served many to count by fine to his customers show for connections, the 30-something-year-old executive was able to hook up with a certain Ador of Tanauan.

It was like a rite of passage for movie stars back then to have their photos shot taken at the photo studio in Makiling. Despite the many years, Trajkovic has been able to preserve a good number of its negatives.

Jet Set, then a big fan of Amalia Fuentes, Nida Blanca and De Vita, borrowed the negatives and had some of them blown up and painted. He originally wanted to showcase portraits of departed celebrities until a customer and fellow movie fan convinced him otherwise.

"I learned that some of them featured in



MODERN and adjacent old-chair's revolver otherwise would have been a traditional grooming center

(IMAGE) Lifelong icons such as Dimples, Eddie Garcia and deposed President Joseph Estrada are also featured in Ever Jusi.

This barbershop makes the cut

To see page 11

the display were actually still alive," he says. "There was an unconscious response as I added more pictures of surviving actors."

Expansion

Now on its third year in the grooming biz, Ever Jusi has expanded to include a beauty salon adjacent to the barbershop.

The development allowed for him to expand his collection and add the photographs of leading ladies of yore such as Fuentes, Gloria Sevilla, Rosa Rosal, Susan Roces, Lilia Cuntapay, Delia Razon, Rosa Rosal and the late Rita Gomez and Hilarion.

For the longest time, wives and girlfriends who accompanied their partners to the barbershop were demanding to know when the men would feature the women. Not only did they get their wish, they were love a place to have their hair and nails done. The salon is run by an all-women team.

"I wasn't quite sure how the barbershop would fare when I first opened it," says de Vera. "To my surprise, the men, whether they are holding court, still prefer the barbershop over the beauty parlor. Barbers can do certain things beauticians can't."

In an ironic twist, adds de Vera, more men, the minister their hair than ever before, have become more conscious about grooming than women. Age usually also equates to more disposable income to spend on such non-basic necessities as manicures, pedicures, body massages and even ear cleaning.

It doesn't hurt that their role models are beautiful people belonging to a bygone era when movie stars looked and acted every inch the part.

E-mail the author at ivegarcia@inquirer.com.ph

SAM MARCOS (above) Holding Hapasan (left)

Demo on spring makeup

INTERNATIONAL Japanese makeup artist, Junya Yamada

RAMBRI ARTIST JUNYA Yamada is holding a demo of the Twinkle collection at the Kanebo counter in Rustan's Tower, today 12 noon-3 p.m.

Jenny Liang, another Kanebo artist, will provide beauty tips.

Per a purchase of two Twinkle 2005 S/S Collection products, the customer gets a free 10 studio-quality photos.

The Twinkle collection by Kanebo introduces a new line of fresh, innovative makeup products and colors for the "Heaven Honey" look.

The Spring/Summer look consists of colors and textures likened to recurring word of delicious light.

Products making up the new range include the Sensuelle Rouge conditioning lipsticks. Gradually lives mouthdoes, Slim Change Dreamy face powder, Eyebrow Coat, Translucency Rouge long-lasting lipsticks, Glitter Fluid Rouge liquid gloss, Color Eyes powder and Color Cheeks powder blush.

Call 6329616.

53 images in one unique Lenten exhibit

HEYTHERE OLD AND NEW SAINTS! —some of them over a hundred years old—will be the cast of "Dekorasyon At Kanayunan," a pre-Holy Week exhibit traditionally held one week before Semana Santa as the Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Remedios in Malate, Rizal.

Conceived and initiated by parish priest Msgr. Mariano T. Balbago Jr. in 2002, the week-long exhibit has become a highlight of Holy Week celebrations in the historic Rizal town where Bonifacio and his Katipuneros sought refuge during the 1896 Revolution.

Msgr. Balbago wanted a graphic and effective way to teach the Passion of Christ to young and old churchgoers.

"What better way than to have holy images visually depict the characters and scenes of the Lord's Passion?" Balbago says. "Holy Week is a time when the hearts and minds of people turn to God. The Holy Week processions capture the people's attention so effectively, as holy images of the main characters of the Passion and various scenes of Christ's ordeal, you tell the story of redemption in a very dramatic and informative way."

From a mere 18 holy images joining the San Mateo Holy Week procession in the immediate post-war era—among them, St. Peter, St. John, Magdalene, Veronica, Mater Dolorosa, Virgen de la Soledad, figures in the Garden, Sanctorum, Holy Sepulcher and Risen Christ—the number of holy images increased to 10 when the exhibit was first held in 2002.

The project has been very well-received and has become so successful that it has spawned a mini coffee-table book and an increase in the number of holy images in the present 53 series. Many of them are larger-than-life tableaux like the Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper and Pieta, among others.

The exhibit has attracted many visitors and devotees in San Mateo in recent years. Msgr. Balbago puts the project together yearly with the help of the Parish Pastoral Council and the San Mateo residents who are owners and custodians of the saints.

The unique Lenten exhibit will run until April 9, at the Parish Hall of Nuestra Señora de Remedios Parochial School. Admission is free.

ANTARCTIC tourism has increased seven-fold in the last 10 years—find out why from one of 12 Tagalog translations of the Earth Pulse series as he stunners by the National Geographic, world leader in geography, cartography and exploration, and Robinsons Malls at the mountain area of Robinsons Place Ermita, Robinsons Town Mall Las Piñas and Robinsons Place Angeles on April 8, 22 and 29, 3-5 p.m.; Robinsons Place Novaliches and Diamond Hills on April 8, 22, 29 and May 6, 3-5 p.m. Call 6830127 or 6834100 local 7108 or 182.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday LIFESTYLE

The dream catcher

Helena is back to stay, and she has a big, beautiful project called Mangenguey

By Elsie Cordero Fernando

Part II

EVERY BIRTHDAY PARTY Helena gave was unique, and there were many of them. Once she rented all the rides of the Fiesta Carnival in Araneta Center, the centers candy machines and the skating rink. The girls were all dressed in little bunny dresses while skating. "But no matter how many projects I had, no matter how crazy I was, I never neglected my family," says Helena. "My father, Tonyo and Karyo, were included in all the parties and pictorials and fashion shows. I hate pictures of 1-year-old Karyo in full makeup sucking her baby bottle."

The old Roces house in Dennis was renewed, empty at the time, and it was decided that Helena hold her next birthday party there. It had 18 rooms and looked spooky enough. The theme was gothic—The Phantom of Madame Tussaud. Aside from the Avalanche crew, designers like Oscar Moralde, Tony Cajuguen, Theo Umali, Snob and a couple of others enthusiastically took on its decoration.

"Every happening was planned weeks in advance. It was like doing a theater production complete with sets, lights, sound systems, costumes, only it was all just us doing everything. Everyone pitched in. We borrowed period furniture from Jo Luis and raffles from the Jimenezes. We rented lights and microphones. We bought wreaths for the patio

THE DREAM 02

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HELENA Caravoda's children's clothes for the MT market, sketched by Maning Obregon, fashion illustrator of the MT Times.

The dream catcher

From page B1

We soon invited relief, just arrived from Iowa, to work. There are sprayed the whole house with fake cobwebs.

"Each fiesta was assigned one room to decorate. The rooms and the people in costumes attending in them were the show itself. I have always believed that you just put together the right people and their eccentricities will ignite into another. The dining is always electric. You never know what will emerge—the inspirations, the unexpected, the magic—then just happen. I was completely immersed in those stories because I was more baffle than all those fields."

The year after, Helena and family moved to a magnificent house in San Juan, which was built by an American in the turn of the century. Helena had it painted all in white and furnished minimally. Her bathroom—our bath room was a hexagonal space on the second floor with a balcony surrounded by trees. The old-fashioned porcelain tub was perched on a platform. Two chandeliers hold up the canvas. You would tell who was "in" with Helena, for those they were entertained in that bathtub. The house had a circular staircase leading to a room—ideal for the new birthday party!

Prophetic

The theme was "Gone with the Wind"—the once-ever South romance—and the music was New Orleans jazz. The girls all wore those huge hoopskirts which, in the frenzy of the party, they would discard, leaving them in their corners and pandemonium! The usual caprices like Bodji, Ferrer flamingos and Tony Cacnio would interact with Leroy Lovaco, Christopher Payumbo, Bobby Caballero, Nando Mapua, Steve de Leon, Raymond Puentes and Debbie Enriquez to create the ambience. Divas Manahan and Nestor Torre were also there to accentuate the spectacular achievement. Little did Helena know that it would be her last party in the country and that an aide, "Gone with the Wind," would be prophetic.

"One day I woke up, awaken-ing, what am I doing in this marriage?" Helena likes to say. "Pinkee did not share my views for the future. We had become strangers, two souls in one pod. It was a very life-awakening. I de-cided to leave. The family made it very hard for me. I didn't realize that leaving him also meant saying goodbye to a country that I loved. With $13,000 borrowed from a friend, I fled, not home to Barcelona, but to the Big Apple where I had access (freedom) of exploring. I was 32.

Humbling

"The years in New York were most humbling," relates Helena. "At first I was woke—I had talent, lots of experience, a great portfolio. I aspired from the top of the line, Oscar de la Renta, to the middling boutiques. The big fashion houses felt I was overqualified and would only be underpaid as an apprentice. The middle management of smaller boutiques, however, would see value in a pro like me who would threaten their jobs.

"After a year in the States, I know that the only way to survive was to tear off the best parts of my past life. It was easier to call it more popular stuff. I felt I was penetrating myself, especially when they wanted to hire me for my management skills rather than for my designing. It was very painful.

"My first job was with a now designer named Regina Cravero. A friend brought me there to help Regina when we were breaking out because her collection, which was showing soon, was running out of stock. I took it! It. This very desperate designer said, 'Do you know how to design? Do you know what's wrong with my dresses? Can you fix it?' I said yes, yes, yes. I was able to track around that collection. I worked with her for a while because she was grateful but soon had to leave because I had no papers."

Eventually, Helena was able to penetrate the New York market by manufacturing her own designs for women, teenagers and children on a small scale. But the garments were regularly left on the racks because the people had to sell her wearables at a discounted price. It was very difficult. But she did penetrate the market. Helena's clothes were in all the big stores like Woman Harem and Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's, Bloomingdale's. But she could not survive. "I knew I would have to produce things I didn't like again. I refused to prostitute me art any longer," so Helena put up the space here. They were a success. She knew how to cook since she was a child presided over it, assisting her mother.

There it'll awak.

"At that time I was already married to Richard Shanley, who is the love of my life. We have an only child, Thea, now 22, who was my only I was so much for when I was young. Times and have, but not anymore."

Richard is descended from some Mayflower stock and is a man who likes to work with his hands. He is a cabinet maker who worked for many years with Jimmy Durham, the famously damn of interior design (like Bo Derek or Vreeland of fashion). He was his construction supervisor. Jimmy Pantoja was the designer of choice of the very rich... like Gueyn, the Rockefellers, the Annenbergs and the White House. Richard worked with Jimmy Pantoja until the end. Then he opened his own company. Many of her clients followed him.

Helena met Richard in 1980, the big one of her stays in New York where she still had it all—power, beauty, fame, money a family, independence. She was not looking for anything. It was pure love. She married Richard in 1981. "We live together and realize that true love is really just learning to accept another's imperfections."

Recurring dream

Last Christmas, Helena told Richard, "I have lived with you now for many years, always with the family as priority. I want to have my turn now—will you give it to me?

He said yes." And so they sold their house in Hampton, the restaurants and their assets to pursue Helena's recurring dream of going back to the Philippines and starting something meaningful, something different.

HELENA dancing in New York. Salt portrait 2006 after her arrival.

"When I was a child, my grandmother on my father's side lived with her brothers and sisters in the Philippines," relates Helena. "Her father was a military doctor during the Spanish-American war. In 1898, when the American were the war the family was forced out.

They departed for Spain, taking with them the pesos, the servants and a slave who had been given as a wedding present. Whenever she visited her grandmother she was served the stinging, servis caldo or rice tapioca tomato that her grandmother had learned to cook in the islands. Helena's father sometimes talked of visiting, but this never came to pass. Leaving home is hard.

Once or twice a year, Helena's grandmother would call the children together and reminisce. It open an old haul from the Philippines that had belonged to the help. In it were sayas and filet pifia barong (dresses) with butterfly sleeves. Also magnificent photographs of the servants dressed in that finery, carrying their white maids. Her grandmother somehow felt that this beautiful life had been stolen from her.

Genetic memories

"When I was living in Witch Rock, my grandmother came from Spain to visit me," relates Helena. "She was already old but had one of those awakenings. She began to remember old curtsy, lullabies and singing them. The words were mostly jumbled and couldn't be understood... it was like her ongoing chat had been filtered through the years. But it built up in me a craving and very early

ON MODEL—one of Helena's Harvest Sales' Fifth Avenue children's line, these Filipino-inspired terno dresses.

Philippine connection.

"When I was Weino it was like a magic door had opened. It was all those genetic memories. My parents were not allowing me to study in Paris, they said I was too young. But I needed to fly! Pinkee provided the wings. It was his function in my life to take me to where my destiny was. I will forever be grateful for that.

Now Helena is back. To stay. She has a big project which involves a beautiful city island in northern Palawan named Mangsee.

Will it be something like Boracay? "Not by any means," says Helena. "Boracay knows we do not need another free-close tourist spot." Will it be another Arabian? "Neither. I do not live in the past. The world has changed, people have changed, I have changed." She envisions Mangsee to be a 22-st century literary salon, a place where intellectuals, artists and leaders can meet for good conversation, music, poetry, happenings. It will be open to foreigners and locals, not limited to the rich, crowding of mind and spirit.

Mangsee is the name of the island but also the name of a kind of "nursery" that Helena wants to help create. Mangsee is a "nursery, with emphasis on the preservation of Philippine arts and crafts, which are now dying because people cannot live on what they earn making them. Through its creative works, Mangsee will redesign and develop Filipino heritage products for distribution to markets, international markets abroad. That way alternative livelihoods will be created. The concept is self-sugar as he envisions.

"Mangsee will be a society dedicated to the preservation of nature and the human spirit," says Helena. And so it is not only in Palawan, but in all the Philippines, and in Helena's future.

There are many souls with big visions that just remain up there. It requires an entirely different set of abilities to concretize a dream. One of them is knowing how to attract the right talents, how to put the correct energies together and allow them to create their own magic. Helena is a dream catcher. People have not forgotten her ex-pacity to move mountains. In the meantime, she will have to work on how to popularize a hitherto lesser-like Mangsee.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

ATENCIA-BALO

Lawyer Pedro Atencia, son of Judge Buenaldo and Aende Atencia, and lawyer Gay Balo, daughter of engineer Rogelio and Esther Balo, married recently at the Manila Metropolitan Cathedral. Reception followed at the Grand Ballroom of Manila Hotel. JC Buenaldo designed the wedding gown.

Milestones

We welcome announcements of weddings and engagements. Submit names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, and gown designer along with a photo of the couple and a sketch of the bridal gown, if any, to the Inquirer, PO. Box 2121, Makati Central Post Office 1262, Makati City. E-mail to lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. A photo of the bride and groom is required if the wedding has already taken place. Announcements will be printed depending on space availability and are not sent to the senders.

DELIVA-BAGARES

Sheryl Hannah "Anna" Santiago Deliva, daughter of Elmy and Alsanice Deliva and granddaughter of veteran photojournalist Edgardo Santiago, married recently Joseph "Gobo" Ilarmos Bagares, son of Emily and Arthur Bagares, in civil rites at the Manila City Hall. Reception was at Pink Pizza Restaurant, Manila.

BRAVO-GAZIAN

Francis John C. Bravo, son of Dr. Franklin and Lily Bravo, and Anthonyn L. Gazian, daughter of Salvador and Irene Gazian, exchanged wedding vows recently at St. Therese Parish, Dagupan City.

FONTIVEROS-RIANO

Arnold Fontiveros, son of Gilbert Jr. and Carmen Fontiveros, and Sheila Marie Riano, daughter of Napoleon and Norma Riano, will exchange vows on April 9 at The Shrine of Jesus, The Way, The Truth and The Life, Mamplasan Ayala, Binan City. Reception will follow at Cameron Palace, CCP Complex. The gowns of the bride and her entourage were designed and executed by Brad Bianco of The Wedding Day of Bishkek City and Garden City.

JUNIOR bridesmaid Gabby Fregil, secondary sponsors Pamela Syling, Michelle and Joanne Fregil, groomsman Raja Fregil, secondary sponsors Scott Syling, Carlo Penferrado and Bert Cortaya

JERE and Cielo with his parents, Margie and Joe Fregil

Business associates become *lifetime partners*

THE BRIDE and groom at the garden of The Manor in Camp John Hay, Baguio City, where the wedding took place

CIELO with secondary sponsors Pamela Syling, Joanne and Michelle Fregil

FDI OPINION editor Jorge Arvisu, FDI food columnist Micky Pania, Boy and Tes Makabenta

BUSINESS ASSOCIATES JERE Fregil and Cielo Regino decided to bring their partnership beyond the corporate world when they exchanged wedding vows recently.

Being both practical persons, the couple decided on a casual yet elegant affair with families. Only immediate family, close friends and business colleagues attended.

At The Manor in Baguio City, they had two weddings—an early morning private ceremony at the St. Joseph Bridal Church with just the couple's parents and relatives in jeans and casual wear and another at the lush garden of the hotel, with the family and guests formally dressed this time.

The Thanksgiving Mass was officiated by the bride's cousin, Father Ed de los Reyes, S.J., who was also the coordinator. Regino walked down the garden path in a simple champagne-colored Hilda Cabia gown escorted by her dad, Chito Regino. Her colleague at Unilever, Hanny Aquino, sang "Dan's All."

The ceremony was highlighted by the couple's recitation of their personalized marriage vows, not the usual "I do." Fregil's children, Jesse and Gaby read messages welcoming their "Tita Cielo" to the family.

The three-day reunion of members of two families from different parts of the world, which involved partying every day, ended with more partying at the wedding reception.

The reception had no ceremonial rubs. The newlyweds mingled with their guests that included relatives from the Chinese side of Fregil's family and Regino's Filipino relatives. They crossed their own wedding.

An audio-visual presentation portrayed the newlyweds as "Shrek" and "Princess Fiona." In spread of the traditional toss of one bouquet, several bunches of flowers were thrown. The woman who did not catch one became the "it" girl.

The men did the garter toss, and the bachelor who was unable to go under the bar was the "it" boy.

Both young and not-so-young danced all night.

The evening was capped by a fireworks display.

THE BRIDE'S family: dad Chito, mom Mary and brothers Mike and Aaron Regino

JUH MAIDS, Leslie Cruz, cousin/flower girl Esther of the bride, Chito with his visiting siblings from the US, Hilario Suarez and Imelda Lucas, and cousins from Florida, David and Dyanne Kim with baby Minjae

PRINCIPAL sponsors Eryl Chua, Lillian Ng, Perry Syling, Leah Makabenta, Agnes Bustillo, Ambassador Tony Bustillo, Imelda Lucas and architect Raul Lucas

Separated woman can't get a job

DEAR EMILY,

Last week, I went for a job interview. The position was for a customer service representative in Makati. I left around 8 to ensure I hadn't worked since I'd been a mom and a housekeeper for so long.

I failed the second interview. The interviewer was brusque with me. First, she said my English wasn't fluent and, second, I didn't impress her.

What should I do? Since I lack the money to go back to school, where can I get materials on English 101 in the workforce? How should I present myself—what is the proper attire for a job interview?

I'm desperate to work since I have a lot of family issues to resolve. I had to move out of the house because my brother has a drug history. I am also separated from a husband who's a gambler.

Im Im: I've been a burden in my mom and sister, who is an overseer, Filipino worker. I want to be financially independent from everyone.

RISE

It took a lot of time to read your letter because you used text-messaging language and abbreviations.

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Marcoal

Don't leave your mind on an office job where English is a must for both written and oral communication. If you didn't learn much English when you were younger, you'd have difficulty learning and catching up now....considering you barely have time for yourself.

To learn a language well, you have to immerse yourself in it—read it, speak it, hear it and know it by heart. You have to know grammar, vocabulary and spelling. You can't use text language or phrases and honestly think that you can already speak English.

English is easy to learn while you're in school. You have your classmates and teachers to practice with. But now that you're much older, out of school, with household chores and kids, and then and then to do....learning the language is now a tall order. It is not doable if you want it done right.

With your determination and willingness to work, I don't think you should even bother applying to companies that use the English language all the time. There are so many jobs where you won't need proficiency in it at all.

Think deep and ask yourself what your strong points are. Are you good in selling? Then hook up with people in that trade and learn the ropes of real estate or multilevel marketing. If you're good with your hands and are creative, try dressmaking, or cooking. And when you go to apply, be pleasant and don't simply flaunt your resume honor.

We all have jobs to play and jobs to do in this life. They can be big and small. Not everyone has the ability to speak more than one language, but that should not be a deterrent to pursue a dream.

Don't be a "square peg in a round hole," as the saying goes. Find the job you'll be most comfortable and happy doing. Start small but think big. Remember what they say about small steps...!

E-mail the author at emarcoal@philstar.com.ph, subject: lifestyle, or send your letters to Inquirer Lifestyle, 6th Marconi, c/o Emily, Makati City.

Tune in to the radio program "Brilliant Ophelia," 7 to 9:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, on dzBB 594 kHz.

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John Paul II's first death anniversary April 2

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS MARKING THE first death anniversary of Pope John Paul II (who died April 2, 2005, in Rome. Not only Catholics are praying for him and to him, asking for help, but people from other religions, as well.

Fray Kings, six quezos and 70 heads of state, including President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and leaders of other religious sects attended the funeral Mass to a giant Pope last year in St. Peter's Square.

Rector A. Reyes of the Rosary way '50s Movement, a lay Marian movement, hopes significant "silence and kindness" last March 20, the day of the mandatory for the 25 new cardinals in Rome.

This lay Marian movement accept spiritual bouquets for the early canonization of Pope John Paul II. Write to Hector Reyes at 6-B Gen. Santiago St., Cubao or City 1400.

Miraculous plan

Now the Missionaries in Tarlac on a hill in San Jose, Tarlac, are built by the Servants of the Risen Christ are only for part of God's miraculous plan.

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Doreng

St. Andre Corsini, patron of the community of 13 monks, including six priests, and who have was devoted by the province's through the efforts of Tarlac Gov. Jose "Kong" Yap in 2002.

The complex now consists of a homepage houses, dormitories, priest's house and library or prayer room. The Servants of the Risen Christ serve as the Parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Watson, Tarlac. St. Corbin is the parish's patron.

A sister congregation, the Handmaids of the Risen Christ, take care of an orphanage nearby and a home for the elderly. Their dormitories are in Mila Rosen, Angeles City.

Another sister congregation, the Oblates of the Risen Christ composed of nine nuns, live in Pilot Village, Los Baños City. The Contemplatives of the Risen Christ in Ramos, Tarlac, spend their time praying in the Adoration Chapel.

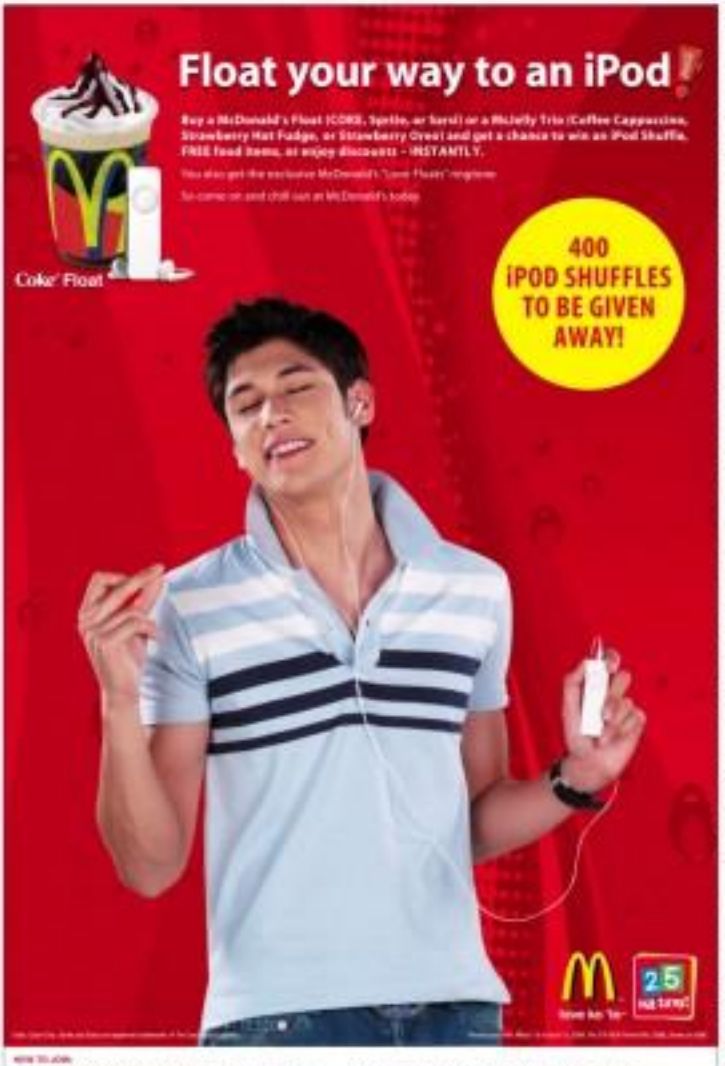
Fr. Andre and Corsini performs multiple ways enhancing the religious life. His entire Rinaldi became a Hundred of the Risen Christ and took the name Sister Mary Paraline. She will be professed on May 13 in the Sacred Heart Parish in Angeles City.

Among the priests in the community is Oblate Fr. Ron Igdalsi, who can be come in the office of Pope John Paul II.

Fr. Andre entered the seminary immediately after high school. He first went to St. Camillus Seminary, then took up his Theology at the University of Santo Tomas Central Seminary. He said, "It was God who set my priorities and not, according to His plan. He guided me to put up the order, so most men could serve Him as priests." Two responses are among Fr. Andre's six priests.

The Monasterio de Tarlac also serves as a retreat house. Those interested can dial (045) 79446-02.

MANY prophecies as the late pope in ads for his help.



2 meetings

The Monastery of the Transfiguration in Malabanban hosted recently the meeting of the Abbot President's Council of Fathers and the 7th Meeting of BIMEC (Benedictine Superiors from East Asia and Oceania).

Attending were Abbot president Bruno Maria, OSB, of the Subiaco Congregation, also present were Abbot President Timothy Kelly of the Cassinese Congregation; Abbot Josef Acker of Montserrat, Spain; Abbot Stephan of Germany, Abbot Albert of Germany and Abbot Tarcisio Nascimento of Manila, among others.

Fr. Mark Butler, OSB, of ABA Ltd International Monastery which sponsored the BIMEC meeting, was also there.

Everyone loved the tranquil beauty of the monastery's hillside home, the solemn liturgy, the silence and the truly Benedictine hospitality of the small community headed by Prior Administrator Fr. Irvin Mc. Bernan, OSB.

Bonifacio fiesta

Investors of St. Vincent Home in Bonifacio and those living in Metro Manila will flock to the Diocesan Shrine of St. Vincent Ferrer in Odiongan, Romblon, for the fiesta on April 5.

The image of the saint will be carried in a fluvial procession at 9 a.m., April 4, from the church to the sea. Both Catholics and Aglipayans will join. At 5 p.m., there will be a procession around the town. The Consolidated Fiesta Mass, officiated by Bishop Tibaldi, will be held at 7:30 a.m., April 5.

The saint is birthed and votive Novena from his body is put in bottles and used to bathe the sick. Former parish priest Fr. Agustin Gallego has seen people get well after the bath.

Appeal

Rev. Ending Pamplona and Rev. Isabel Morales have issued this appeal: "The sigh the statue of our parishioner, Rev.Fr. Alfonso O. Fernandez, and with the assistance of the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee, our parish has launched a campaign to raise funds for the construction of a bigger church and convent...on the lot given by Gonzalo Morales...in St. Vincent Ferrer Village, Bgy. Calumbo City."

Those wanting to help can call 0305-9540.00 or write to Fr. Alfonso Bernardo at the St. Vincent Ferrer Parish at the above address. Thank you for your kindness.

Renewal

Archbishop Ramon Arguelles will guide Prayer Meetings of the Holy Souls during the Lenten preparation on Mon., 6 p.m., April 03, at the Manila Seedling Bank, Quezon ave. cor. Elliptical. The public is invited. Registration fee of P800 will cover lunch and meals. Text (0915) 9298803 or call 531-2157. There is "personal connection as Key to National Renewal."

Antonia Ricardo passed away at the Home of the Elderly of the God Loves Community in Apex, Lt. Tinio. She 84-ish... call Brother Gene (63) 7-700566.

Recollection

Priests priest Fr. Tony Catalina and Fr. Jerod Augusto will lead a recollection of employees of Rainbow Center and RL Builders at 8:30 a.m., April 8, at the Harbour Center, Vito, Tondo.

THE ABBOT presidents of the Benedictine Subiaco Congregation, Fr. Bruno Maria, OSB (second from right), delivers his "thank you" and his welcome speech at the end of the meeting of the Council of Fathers at Transfiguration Monastery. Above photo are (from left) Fr. Abbot Tarcisio Nascimento, OSB, of Manila; Fr. Robert Josef Acker, OSB, of Montserrat, Spain; and Fr. Prior Santo Bernan, OSB, of Malabanban.

SERVANTS of the Risen Christ in Monasterio de Tarlac in San Jose, Tarlac.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday LIFESTYLE

Streamlined but multi-dimensional

Dimensioné's compact pieces are ideal space-saving solutions

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SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM
Get AHEAD this Summer!
AHEAD TUTORIAL & REVIEW

Text by Alex T. Vergara
Photos by Chito Nuñez

THE GROWING popularity of townhouses and condominiums among today's young Filipinos only partly explains the success of Dimensioné. Inc. 2002, the furniture chain's streamlined and compact pieces offer ideal space-saving alternative to stand-out solutions.

Despite adopting such a no-frills approach, however, Dimensioné is able to incorporate lovely, functional and even elegant elements to its merchandise. There's lots to like and marketing apparently homeowners on the lookout for reasonably priced yet modern pieces.

"Our goal has been clear from the start," says Clara Lambert, brand manager of Dimensioné. "We cater to the modern-day living requirements of young couples and single parents in search of economical yet stylish ways to live."

Another proof of Dimensioné's growing appeal over the years is its current 16 stores in 1978 with a single outlet owned and operated by Jess Chan) is in its crowned visibility. Apart from its eight stand-alone stores housed in some of the country's main shopping malls, the brand's presence extends to Our Home outlets in SM Megamall, SM City Fairview and SM City Bicutan.

"Although we've been offering mid-to-mid-income that go well with big to mid-sized houses," says Lambert, "it would be unwise to say that Dimensioné's inventions has always been to focus on maximizing functional spaces."

But to appeal even beyond the boundaries of the home, as Dimensioné has a wide selection of quality "outward" pieces that are proving to be a hit among big corporate clients—from cafés to fast food chains, banks to corporate offices—which is now tracks, McDonald's, Citibank, Panchito Home and Yellow Cab Pizza.

In-house pieces which presently include its chemical-wrought tables and chairs, are imbued with the same characteristics as items meant for

DYNAMIC couple Ed and Margarita Delgado

BACCHUS owner Clifford and Helen Lichatow

FRIENDLY neighbors Cha-cha Madrigal and Mandy Edeza

CLOSE friends Gina de Venecia and Mel Pineda

BOLTON fans Abby and Jun de Leon

VIKING family Judith Lynch and Joy Wiseman

Reminiscing with Sergio Mendes music

LIFE DOES UNFOLD in mysterious ways. One can be so passionate about building dreams over a decade, but in an instant, everything can be taken away. When challenges happen, they are difficult to comprehend, so my attitude is to think that when life closes a door, there are always other doors to open, to explore and to continue pursuing even bigger dreams.

Although one may get frustrated and cramped about the circumstances that life dish out, the key is never forward it to be encouraged about the future. A helpful hint: to be grounded and a mess. Music lifts burdened spirits and truly enlightens the mind. Recently, it has been uplifting to watch the many concerts by beloved local artists of decades past. My husband, Brenda, and I have had many trips to the Araneta Coliseum to see iconic and evergreen artists coming in to sing memorable songs.

Upon the invitation of philanthropist Andie Serrano, Jessie and I attended the concert-concert of Sergio Mendes. It was indeed a happy road down memory lane with songs like "One after Jive" and "When I Think

Although the crowd that evening was closer in age to my mother, I enjoyed dancing to the upbeat percussion rhythm

TESSA!

Jessie Prieto-Valdes

SO CLOSE! Michael Bolton

I'm Going Out of My Mind." This Brazilian artist once lured in New York, but how second chic I can remember with his original band—Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66. Although half the crowd that evening was close to age to my mother, I did enjoy the evening dancing to the upbeat percussion rhythm.

Dining and wining

The world is indeed so small. And a few weeks before, I was dining with the proprietors of Dominic Lynch Rages, Jesus Michel Cuevas, at a open-air cafe, Bruxas-style, gourmet diner at Old Manila Restaurant in Manila Peninsula, flanked by Barcelona wines and Chilled Lichatow. 75 artisanal-sized to compliment food and the premium wines of Chateau Lynch Rages from the Bordeaux region in France.

Somewhere between the 2005 Ethyl Lynn, the chardonnay wine of Jean Michel from the Languedoc region of France, and the three or four vintage reds of Chateau Lynch Rages, Jean Michel told us that he happens to be a really close friend of Sergio Mendes. Together with their wives, they have even gone around sunset in the winery in Bordeaux.

This guy sure good friends. Jean Michel joked that Sergio is a loan singer but a brilliant composer and music arranger. They both have a passion for wine and so naturally, they share their rare collection of vintage wines.

Still on my final days of living on overseas—I just can't seem to start being a vegetarian again!—I enjoyed the Asian beef tenderloin with the 1995 vintage red, sure-to-delight-in Bordeaux Wine Shop (contact 8159821) in Makati (straight to Hotel).

For me, the evening was to relax and let us set mind through the different viewings and tried to commune on the ala-carte-d. Fully feels so distinct from the earthy, bold flavors like a wine expert, I was just happy to be getting pleasantly acquainted with my favorite that evening. Chateau Lynch Rages, 2000, a very classic vintage showing great structure and balance—at least that's what the brochure says.

Unfortunately, I would not enjoy the classic delicious chocolate Fondant with white chocolate sorbet, chocolate macaroons and chocolate classy tuiles served with orange zest and cognac—don't ask me anything by giving up decadence for Lent. I was also good not much to only one or two glasses of wine, since I am still nursing my 13-month old Athena.

After all that reminiscing with Sergio Mendes, we watched another concert—Michael Bolton, a balladeer of more recent vintage. Makati Shang JW Joy Nostalgia invited us to the Grand Ballroom last week. Makati Shangri-La was the official residence of Michael B and Soles received him to and from the concert venue.

In case of Life's little coincidences, we recognized the Soles chauffeur, Ronel de Guzman, as he was also the one who drove us to the airport when we participated in The Asia Soles Masters Golf Tournament late last year. Ronel is in charge of Soles' Quality Control but likes to work hands on by driving VIPs like Michael Bolton around.

The Shangri-La group has been up genuinely putting their cards in the real estate market with the launch of the Grand Shang Towers. This prime residential condominium has amazing five-star amenities such as fully equipped gym, spa, tranquil-style pool, function rooms and a colorful children's play area. The best part about living there is that it's a resort's throw away from Greenbelt shopping. The Makati skyline is quite magnificent from the top floors of the Grand Shang.

Good vibes and charity

One needs to filled with cheer and renewed energies. It is an excellent idea to naturally clean the air in your home. Singing, dance, burning incense and creating positive invocations to all areas of the house can definitely change its energy.

A more effective way to promote auspicious vibes is to do charity work. Visiting homes quite across Stella Guillermo-Robles climbed to raise funds for the iconic landside victims with a charity bazaar and variety show. The event headed the homes in the Mother Market and invited several personalities to sell old clothes. Stella raised over P1 million for the Red Cross committee in Leyte—quite an achievement!

Anyways, Super-Y Tim Yap and I set up what was undoubtedly the most colorful beach, festooned with thatch, and surfer, bejeweled accessories and fancy tops. I was stocked that people were actually interested in my unused clothes, mostly evening from local designers. Instead cashout or went all sold out. Although I was thinking of keeping some of the suits for future theme parties, it was a more pleasant feeling to be able to help refill the lives of people who have been so affected by this tragedy. Plus the sale de-cluttered my closet!

Every day is truly a new beginning! If we all learn to share whatever blessings we have with one another, just think of all the small miracles that we would bring to everyone and with many small miracles, surely the big ones cannot be far off.

E-mail me at sospreeves@inquirer.com.ph

STUNNING beauties Sonia Tuga, Donna Rose, Bella Gutierrez-Bautista, Gretchen Barretto and Rosanna de Perio-Ledesma

LIZ Revillame, Willie Revillame, Clarissa Sto Tomas-Bolivar and Julius Bolivar

SENIOR Member Jack Meng-Arguelles

LOVELY ladies Gaby Zita, Nena Tarnoso and Mia Lacson

BACCHUS host Alex Lichatow, Tan Princess and Chateau Lynch Bages owner Jean Michel Cuevas

RUSTAN'S head Nina Tarnoso, Ed Lacson and Shang's Tess Dy

CEBU Pacific couple Joy and Lance Gokongwei and head crew Gene Perry

SUPPORTIVE parents Arsenio Ilusa and Eddie Contreras

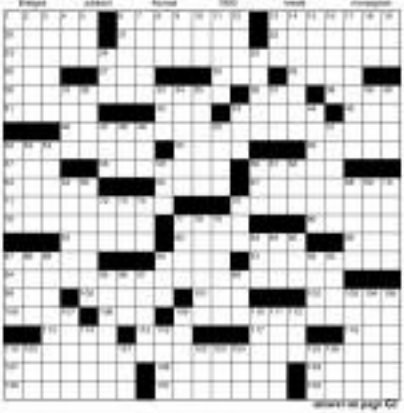
CEBU execs Zaira Favis and Bindoy Favis and cousin Mia Dardo

BABY Arman, Dr. Jason Dee and Dr. Ejercito

CHARITABLE Joanne Bello Gutierrez calling for clothes.

Sunday Crossword

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo — BREAKFAST



answer on page C2

ALABANG Town Center's Stores of the Year—Nike Park: Paolo Tuason of Nike Park; Jim Ayala, Ayala Land president; Miguel Zobel de Ayala of Nike Park; Marcos O. Katigbak, Ayala Land EVP and Ayala Malls Group head; and Ross D. Alexandra, Cobo Holdings, Inc. president

GRAND Stores of the Year—Bayo: Fernando Zobel de Ayala; Manny G. Katigbak, Ayala Land EVP and Ayala Malls Group head; Pardo and Lyn Ayjerso of Bayo; Jimmy and Connie Bitong; and Jaime Ayala, Ayala Land president

Year's best retailers honored by mall

AYALA MALLS RECENTLY presented its 5th Annual Merchants Rewards. The reward program recognizes establishments that adhere to the highest standards of excellence and innovation. Awardees have distinguished themselves in retail in terms of visual merchandising, store operations and marketing.

The special tribute to Ayala Malls' new clients included is Merchant Awards in the morning of Antipolo, Greenhills 3, and the Awards Night at Greenhills 3 Deck.

Speakers during the forum were retail and creative experts Fred Hartmoll, managing director of Hartmoll Retail Consulting Ltd., Pete de Agustin, president of Lenovo, Inc., and Joe Ortega, chair and CEO of Brandclub.

Awardees included institutions in the retail industry top-performing stores and brands in Ayala Malls.

Ayala Land, led by Fernando Zobel de Ayala, launched its retail together with Jaime Ayala, president of Ayala Land, Inc.; Manuel Estrella, executive vice president and Ayala Malls Group head; Bono Manaoldos, president of Cobo Holdings, Inc.; Ramona Dantalion, vice president of Ayala Malls; and the management team of Ayala Malls.

Ayala's many Corporate Zobel de Ayala, Jon Livera, Tito Arrogant, Arturo Mendoza, Angel Aguirre, Myrna Sison, Digna Gamos, Analine Sison-Juan, Mich in Mangada and Vicky Ong-go. Emcee was David Celdran and guest performers was Jennifer Nino.

The real stars, of course, were the winning Remembers. Top winners of the 5th Ayala Malls Merchants Rewards are Bayo, Grand Store of the Year. It also received the Overall Marketing Excellence award.

Overall Visual Merchandising Excellence Winners were Louis Vuitton Christian and Carlton (Tied); Stores of the Year were Toby for Greenhills, Kids of Boys for Alabang Town Center and Nike Park for Ayala Center Cebu.

Store Operations Excellence awards went to Celestial's Luxury Clothes, Rockport, Converse Luggage, BO Active Harmonie, Adidas Gear, Toby's People Are People and Toby's Greenhills Goods, Alabang Town Center's People Are People, Branch Body, Charles and Keith, Nike Stockists and Kids of Boys; and Ayala Center Cebu's Lacoste Apparel, Bayo, Nike Park, Levi's and Marks & Spencers.

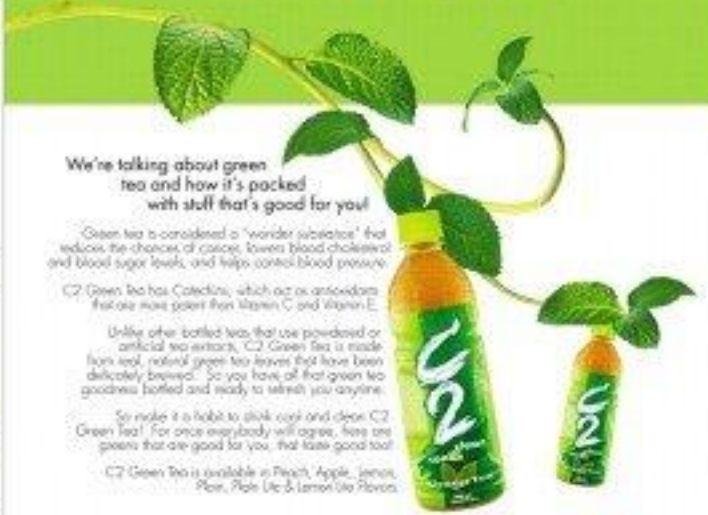
The Most Promising Retailers were all Up Pimps and Kids of Boys in Greenhills, Wright's Palace in Greenhills, The Good Earth and The 56th Avenue in Alabang Town Center, and Play 2 Lovers and Big Man in Ayala Center Cebu.

GLORIETTA'S Stores of the Year—Toby: Emmanuel Pineda of Toby

ALABANG Town Center's Stores of the Year—Kids of Boys: Carrie Bitong and Jaja Agamao/Kids of Boys

Greens are good for you.

(And we're not just talking veggies!)



We're talking about green tea and how it's packed with stuff that's good for you!

Green tea is considered a "wonder substance" that reduces the chances of cancer, lowers blood cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and helps control blood pressure.

C2 Green Tea has Catechins, which act as antioxidants that are more potent than Vitamin C and Vitamin E.

Unlike other bottled teas that use powdered or artificial tea extracts, C2 Green Tea is made from real, natural green tea leaves that have been delicately brewed. So you have all that green tea goodness bottled and ready to refresh you anytime.

So make it a habit to drink cool and clean C2 Green Tea! For once everybody will agree, here are greens that are good for you, that taste good too!

C2 Green Tea is available in Peach, Apple, Lemon, Plain, Plain Lite & Lemon Lite Flavors.

Nothing relaxes and recharges like C2 Green Tea!

MASTER lamp (P6,995)

Streamlined but multidimensional

Posted page F1

...the home: compact, stylish and durable.

Another welcome feature are among singles and newlyweds, of course, is Homeowner's reasonable prices. The products they carry, says Lumbad, have been carefully sourced from all over the world toward not only eye-candy colors, peculiar dimensions and designs, but also an ideal price points.

"Not even if they're affordably priced, our pieces remain strong on each aspects as comfort and style," he adds.

Living on one's own or moving to a new home with your own family has become a looming prospect with the help of home stores like Homeowner.

E-mail the author at sweyan@inquirer.com.ph

SQUARE-BACK Bunny chair (P1,695)

SEE Mon chair (P1,595)

SEE Mon bar chair in lime green (P1,995)

HEART-SHAPED back Bunny chair (P1,695)

Glade Magic Gel

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Win up to P100,000 instantly!

Sa Glade Magic Gel, may instant bango. Instant panalo!

How to join:

Text na sa Glade Magic Gel MagiCash!

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

Batanes on the rise

Text by Gilby M. Carballo
Photos by Bunny Fernando, Maiann Santos, Sandra Nepomuceno

ONE SUMMER WAY BACK IN THE '70S, WE MUST HAVE been among the few intrepid souls who ventured into yet uncharted seas and unexplored lands when we took off on a whim for Basco, Batanes.

Armed with nothing but our sense of adventure, we boarded a PAL plane, then the only carrier servicing the island weekly. With us was the late great director Lino Brocka and rascal his friends, as he was then fascinated in knowing the country for locations for his movies.

After an hour-and-a-half flight, we caught sight of what appeared to be the dirt runway a couple of cautious lazing about, and a group of grade school children running around, clapping their hands to welcome of the aircraft. The plane made several circles around the runway as we glimpsed the children shooing away the carabaos before we made our bizarre landing.

Upon deplaning, the kids were still there crowding us with silent curiosity. Who were these strangers, their eyes seemed to ask, and why were they here? This we had to our meager introduction to the island, and what ours is follow.

We boarded a jeepney, which our new hairy told was the only one on the island, and asked the driver to take us to the church in town. The Filipino parish priest, whose name we have already forgotten, was surprised to see us. Understandably, he offered to house us even before we asked and serve as our unofficial tour guide during the week-long visit.

Smallest province

We were told Batanes is the smallest Philippine province in terms of population and land area (1200 sq km, half of which are hills and mountains). The pop-

BATANES, G2

Bakasyon Pamilya Package

Inclusions:

1. 3D/2N stay at The Legend Palawan
2. Full Board Meals
   - Buffet breakfast, lunch & dinner at The Legend Palawan
   - Choice of one-time only set dinner at an alternative Fish partner restaurant (in lieu of one buffet dinner at The Legend Palawan)
   - Complimentary coffee or tea service for duration of stay
3. Tours
   - Half-day cruise of Honda Bay with stop at Snake island or Pandan island
   - St. Paul Underground River Tour - a UNESCO-declared Heritage Site
   - Packed meals on tours
   - Experienced and licensed tour hosts
   - Transfers to and from hotel
   - All entrance fees to sites, permits and cottage fees

P 9,999 NETT PER PERSON (for family of 4)

Experience The Legend Palawan

Imagine an unspoiled out-of-town getaway in the country's last nature frontier. Experience something different: Puerto Princesa and check-in to The Legend Palawan!

Excitement. Adventure. Relaxation.

THE LEGEND PALAWAN
PUERTO PRINCESA
Where Business and Pleasure Meet

SCENERY for an artist's palette in the Batanes seascape

HABLOBOB scenery

A TRADITIONAL stone house in Sabtang

Batanes on the rise

From page G1

stanies there all over the province was a little over 13,000, with 40 percent concentrated in the capital Basco.

Ten small volcanic islands make up the province, only three of them inhabited – Sabtang, Itbayat and Batan with the capital Basco, plus Ivana, Uyugan, and Mahatao which are visited.

The islands of Sabtang and Itbayat were supposedly interesting locations, but we were told that adventurous as to venture out after hearing stories that one had to jump from the boat as the cliff at Itbayat, which didn't have a pier at that time. We also heard of people getting stranded in Sabtang due to bad weather and having to stay for months on the island.

Batan was sufficient for us at the moment. Taking the only jeep on the island, we braved the rolling hills that could only be visited one of the fourth highlands with similar small stone houses, except that the houses had thick cogon roofing, with coolness and cattle grazing in the rolling hills. The entire scenario was of another country. There were no signs here to remind us that we were in the Philippines, and the calls blasted away with broadcasts from Taiwan.

We found women in the fields garbed in the usual, a traditional woven head gear of grass that kept the weather cool during the day and warm during the rainy season. We never found this particular headgear in any other province.

Basco is the northernmost district of Islands in the Philippines, home of the typhoons, closer to Taiwan than to the Philippine mainland (190 km south of Taiwan, and 160 km from Aparri). It is said that rain could beat the clock over all the way from Taiwan to Batanes, and it is the only province with winter from November to February, summer from March to May, the rainy season from June to October, and a two-month indian summer sometime between September and October.

Apart from the weekly flight, with erratic schedules depending on the weather, a navy boat visits once a year with supplies from Manila. Batanes was therefore an unseen from the mainland as it was in culture and language. Anthropologists described Ivatan as an Austronesian language (and a dialect, but a language, the researchers constantly emphasized).

30 years later

The Batanes of today is totally different from our memories of 20 years ago, although still ravaged by typhoons, still small in population (only over 16,000 persons-wide), still our only province with "culture" as a season, still blessed with unpolluted air, serene and picturesquely rolling hills and natural rock formations, we can count on our fingers the number of traditional stone houses and can no longer find women wearing the vakul.

Instead, the houses are of cement, especially in town centers, and the vakul is found for sale in the marketplace as tourist souvenirs, and in the new (false commercial. Technology has obviously arrived in the form of internet cafés, and the cell phone and satellite dishes blanket the entire island.

The rolling hills are still an attraction as they were in "Hilumayin Ko Ka Langit" which local Brenda is feeling the first in de a film on the islands. But today some of the hills are dubbed "Mauflower Country" and pretty soon, perhaps we will find there's "Richfield Mountain."

The Department of Tourism has listed the province as an "emerging destination." There are various lists, led by the Batanes Resort with its six duplex-type cottages perched on a hill overlooking the rocky beach, and the Ivatan Lodge in town with its modest rates, both operated by the provincial government.

There are now more homes of cement – at least 50 segment in Basco and 20 more in the other municipalities, and trucks roll over buses. However, there is still no convenience in Batan, and fuel and chains are unknown in the province.

Asian Spirit operates a twice-weekly direct flight from Manila, its other flights of the week include a stop-over in Tuguegarao. Batanes' roads are paved, and provisions no longer seem the problem. Package tours are becoming popular with domestic and foreign travelers, apart from its natural attractions, the province's other tourist stops include

CEMENT roads, combination of stone and cement houses, cogon-roofing on some houses are common sights in Sabtang.

"UGLY LIKAY" shops with clothes brought all the way from Manila

Protected zone

In 2001, Congress passed a law declaring the province as a protected zone. That same year, the province also applied to be included in the Unesco World Cultural Heritage list. According to the riders in the province, there are 939 cultural sites and 136 natural sites in the province up for consideration.

The unique solidity of the province qualifies Batanes as a landscape and seascape deserving of protection due to its importance to migratory birds from Northeast Asia and Japan. The soldier, a small brown bird found only in limited every September, has of late diminished in numbers, a fact similarly suffered by the kingfisher grey-faced buzzard.

The traditional stone dwellings of limestone, sands and gasa roofs are also disappearing, although there are some to be found in Ivana and Uyugan, and on the island of Sabtang.

The median age in Batanes is 22. It is obviously a young population even if a good percentage leave for the mainland to pursue a career. However, there are quite a number who acquire education in Manila and return home to practice what they have learned. Like the young and articulate OIC of Batanes Resort, Tina Delmendo. After graduating with a degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management at Arellano University in Manila, she quickly returned to Basco and now is one of the more vocal advocates of responsible tourism in the area.

She tells us stories of how foreigners have been showing rash interest in the place that they have offered to buy the resort as well as portions of the province, with promises of helping the islanders protect their natural resources. But the islands cannot be their gifts tongues. Perhaps her education in Manila has taught her that... not to be too trusting and naive.

Tina is caught in a dilemma that face many of the young residents of this island paradise. Should they succumb to the temptation of letting in the moneyed investors who will develop the islands for commercial reasons and ultimately destroy its natural beauty? Or will they hang on to what they have and be content with being the backward province it still is today?

Or is there a middle ground, a way for responsible progress and eco-tourism? Only time and the next decade will tell.

Email the author at bbgarcia@yahoo.com

FACTS! Abad's house and museum on a hill in Basco

OLDEST stone house in Ivana built in 1907 with the town's oldest residents Florentina Barcelo (center), age 79

TEENAGE boys play the ubiquitous basketball game over to a renovated version of the old town house

COTTAGES of the Batanes Resort on the hills of Basco

VIEW of a traditional room house in Tabaong

ANSWER TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD

THE FARM AT SAN BENITO

The Farm at San Benito is a world-class alternative medical health center and a beautiful tropical spa resort. Known as "Hippocrates Health Resort of Asia". It is endowed with many natural amenities that facilitate healing. At the Farm we offer our guests the path to healing, rejuvenation and vitality on a level rarely dreamed of in the modern world, based on the holistic principles of wholefoods, mind and spirit. The Farm is inviting you to treat yourself to the kind of experience by availing our Great Deal at The Farm package.

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*Anahaw villa rate is applicable for four (4) persons

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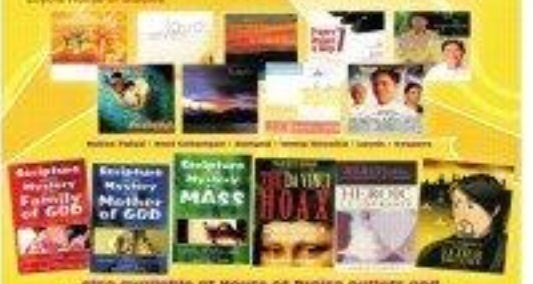


also available at House of Praise outlets and all leading bookstores and record bars nationwide

Watch out for Jonathan's Good Friday special!

Kunin Mo, Diyos

ULTRASHAPE

Lipo Without The Suction

Marie France brings to Manila the 1st Non-invasive breakthrough in Body Contouring

PLASTIC surgeons have invented a machine that can 'melt away' body fat in a patient's lunchbreak – ULTRASHAPE. This treatment gets rid of unwanted bulges, and unlike liposuction does not require surgery. FAST, EFFECTIVE and SAFE, it's the most advanced method of body contouring to date.

Ultrashape was founded 5 years ago in Delaware, USA by Ami Glickman M.D., formerly a senior plastic

surgeon and Yoram Eshel, PhD, MBA, a leading expert in medical physics with 15 years experience in high-power ultrasound technology. Together they set out to pioneer non-invasive body contouring. When they started Ultrashape, it was well known that ultrasound waves were able to break down and destroy fat cells, releasing the fat contained within them. Some form of liposuction had already started experimenting with ultrasound probes to liquefy fat and make it easier to suck them out. Glickman and Eshel built on that to come up with a unique concept of Ultrashape.

Using a focused ultrasound beam, Ultrashape destroys fat cells effectively in the stomach, thighs (saddlebags), love handles and buttocks. It works by focusing high frequency ultrasound waves from outside the body to targeted areas. These ultrasonic waves break down fat cells without damaging blood vessels or other tissue such as skin, muscle, bone and nerves. From there, the broken down cells are absorbed into the patient's white blood cells and are then eliminated from the body through natural processes.

Ultrashape promises an average of about 2 cm in a single treatment.

According to Dr. Eshel, "The inherent safety of our method lies in the fact that we only do half the traditional job compared to liposuction and let nature do the rest." Physiological clearance of the fat tissue occurs over a period of 3 weeks following the procedure, similar to the way the body clears out damaged tissue found in a bruise.

Normally about 4 sessions are recommended to fully achieve one's ideal figure. Women and men who have tried it are excited about the fact that immediate results were seen already after just a single session.

Ultrashape promises an average of about 2 cm in a single treatment. It is an easy procedure. No anesthesia is required because it is non-invasive. You walk in, get the treatment and walk out. It's as easy as that. There is no recovery period. Patients can resume their normal activities right after a treatment. It does not have the risks of liposuction and can be used to effectively deal with small problem-areas of fat. Probably the safest and most effective non-invasive slimming treatment to date, Ultrashape is definitely a breakthrough in body contouring.

Ultrashape is now available at Marie France. Call 894-BODY (2639) for your free consultation.

Before Ultrashape — 14 Days After Ultrashape

Before Ultrashape — 28 Days After Ultrashape

TRAVEL BRIEFS

Fun and games for beach lovers

WHITEROCK in Subic promises a lot of fun and games for Filipino beach lovers this summer. Here can jet ski, go kayaking or drive a speedboat. Visitors can get some pampering at the resort's Wellness Center with its new summer promo prices on body scrub and facial treatments. Children can enjoy the swimming pool, game room, RTC beach volleyball, bowling center and, for the very young ones, the playpen. Other amenities include the resort's function halls, better-equipped gym, with brand new areas, free coffee and tea in all rooms, renovated beds and beach shower rooms, improved air-conditioning, plus added features at Greg's Warenwelt, including Flying fish and banana boat. Whiterock offers room rates to its seafood menu and international buffet. Call 4212781, 4211782 or 4212783, or e-mail reservations@whiterockbeachhotel.com. Visit www.whiterockbeachhotel.com.

Tagaytay visitors

OFFICIALS of Dubuan Town in Shandong Province, east of Beijing, visited Tagaytay Highlands recently. The SM Investment Corp., led by its chair, Henry Sy Sr., gave the Chinese guests, led by director Wang Shubin, a tour of the Highlands. The Chinese visitors were impressed by the all-Filipino real estate big-shots' village, The Woodlands. Belle Corp., winner of the "Best in Leisure Property Development" award during the 23rd edition of the National Consumers Awards and People's Choice Awards, is the developer of the Tagaytay Highlands, Alabang, and Greenlands properties.

More Paris flights

EMIRATES, the Dubai-based international airline, has doubled daily flights to Paris, increasing both seat and cargo capacity. The airline currently operates 12 flights a week to Paris. The increase to number of flights will offer customers greater flexibility. The additional flights will be serviced by the 257-seat Airbus A330-200 aircraft, configured in three classes. Members of Skywards, Emirates' frequent flyer program, can earn Skywards Miles when flying to any class between Dubai and Paris in either direction.

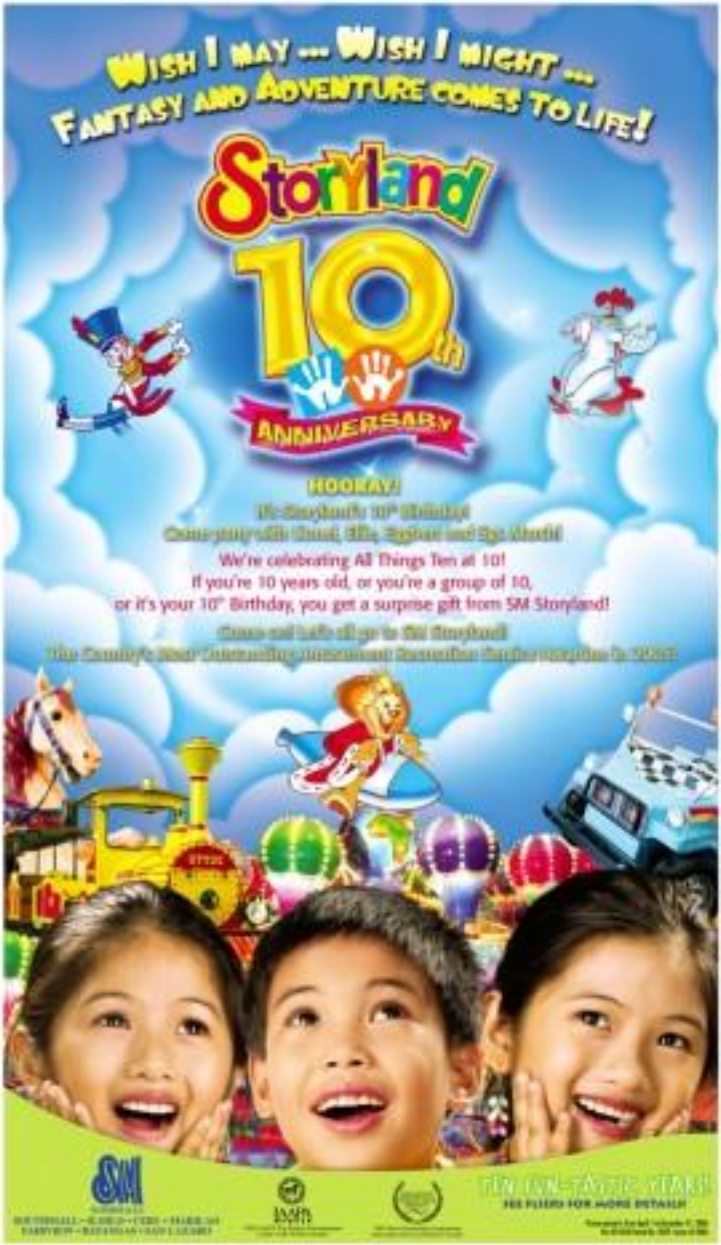
Top agency

KOREAN national carrier Asiana Airlines has recognized Clark International Travel agency as one of the top travel agencies. Asiana's regional manager, Hyun E Kim, presented the award to the travel agency's general manager, Yoon Soo Cho, for the company's contribution to Asiana airlines' operations in Clark Air Base. Aside from Manila and Clark, Asiana Airlines also flies to international destinations from the Cebu Mactan International Airport. Present during the awarding ceremony were Asiana Airlines principal sales representatives Mike Cardenas and Abby Ledesma; Asiana Airlines acting GM for passenger Estelle Tibu, and acting passenger sales manager Jeannie Magbuyao.

Shopping hotspot

IMM Bangsue, Bangkok's newest shopping destination, is just a flight away via Thai Airways. The store has over 50 international and Asiawest jewelry makers. It also houses Thailand's largest supermarket (the Gourmet Market), a food court, upscale retail stores, luxury car display rooms, book stores, lifestyle shops, fashion, beauty and health care, etc. Future developments include a five-star hotel (to be managed by Ito Centurion Hotels, owner of Siam Intercontinental), Asia's largest recreational Siam Ocean World, a cinema and bowling complex, and even an opera theater. Siam Opera's Siam Paragon is a joint venture of The Mall Group (operator of The Mall Department Store, Emporium Shopping Complex and Siam Discovery Center) and Bangkok International Properties Inc. Thai Airways now includes this new shopping mecca in its Asian Orchid Holidays tour packages. Call 4134744 (Makati), 5280322 (Ortigas), 0502-0502405 (Cebu) or www.thaiairways.com. Thai Tue 12 times weekly to Bangkok.

AWESOME views can be enjoyed even at the swimming pool, nestled inside the resort property.



SM Paragon